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A  
History  
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THE MORGAN CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In Character of The Corporation  
of Morgan City

1930







**A  
History  
of  
Morgan City,  
Louisiana**

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**THE MORGAN CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

*In Observance Of This Community's  
100th Birthday*

**1960**

SECOND PRINTING







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*Dedication*

This book is respectfully and gratefully dedicated to Mr. and Mrs. Emile J. Lehmann without whose encouragement and assistance it would never have been issued and to Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Peltier, Sr., for their financial support which makes possible this publication.

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## *Preface*

The Morgan City Historical Society was organized in 1957 by a group of Morgan City High School boys and girls whose interest in American history had been so stimulated by their teacher, C. J. Peltier, Jr., that they wanted to devote more time outside the classroom to study of the subject.

In setting forth their aims, the charter members, who were Bonnie Allbritton, James Guedry, Dave Kahn, Jr., Larry Loeb, Glenn Robison, Brenda Shirley, Margie Verrett, and Carole Webster, were inspired by their advisor, Mr. Peltier, to make one of their principal objectives the publication of a history of Morgan City. They agreed to begin research work that year and make the society's goal completion of the history by 1960, the year in which Morgan City would celebrate its 100th anniversary of incorporation.

Members of the society the following year, 1958-1959, were Peggy Acosta, Gay Derks, Billy Duet, Dave Cavalier, Ellen Stansbury, Janet Thomas, Barry Talbot, and Mike Vidos.

Papers prepared by the students on various phases of Louisiana as well as American history, lectures by university professors and other programs have contributed each year to the society's preparation for the task of compiling the history, but the bulk of the research and composition fell to the lot of the 1959-1960 society members whose names appear on the page entitled, "The Authors".

"We would like to point out," the authors say in offering this book to the public, "that we have had little, if any, experience in research and writing and we realized only after getting underway, that we needed a great deal more time to do a complete history. We hope that our readers will take into consideration that we were all in our senior year of high school and that keeping up with our classwork and all of the activities relating to graduation made it difficult for us to accomplish what we did on this history.

"We were fortunate indeed, to have at our disposal the newspaper files of the Morgan City Review dating back to 1875, and Mrs. Lela King Lehmann's personal files of



historical information collected over many years. We are also frank to admit that without the assistance of Mr. Peltier and Mrs. Lehmann who revised our initial efforts and edited and re-wrote where necessary we could never have completed this much of the history in time for publication.

"New information is coming to light every day. We feel that through efforts of new members of the Morgan City Historical Society and suggestions, fresh facts and constructive criticism from the public, more extensive coverage of Morgan City's history can be furnished in a future publication. We would like to see a museum in Morgan City to store the many valuable documents and relics we have come across in our research. Any profit from the sale of the book will be dedicated to such a purpose.

"We hope that this book will be enlightening and enjoyable. We are proud to be able to make this book our contribution to the success of Morgan City's Centennial celebration."

The Morgan City Historical Society is affiliated with the Louisiana Historical Society. At the annual meeting of the Louisiana Historical Society on February 19, 1960, Mr. Peltier received a special honor for his efforts in promoting interest among high school students in American and Louisiana history.

Members of the Morgan City Historical Society for the coming year, 1960-1961, will be Milford Blum, Luke Cutrone, Janet Freeman, Teresa Metz, Mark Nix, Frances Ratcliff, Sally Shelton, and Eugene Weber. Only Morgan City High School seniors with a "B" or better average are eligible to belong, and active membership is limited each year to four boys and four girls. Honorary memberships are conferred upon individuals who make significant contributions to the group or its projects.

Honorary members to date are Dr. Walter Lowry, Dr. Joe Gray Taylor, Dr. Philip Uzee, Miss Shirley Weber, Mr. Charles F. Garber, Mr. and Mrs. Sol Loeb, Miss Corinne Peace, Mr. and Mrs. Dave Kahn, Mrs. James Waldrop and Mr. and Mrs. Emile J. Lehmann.



## *Morgan City Before 1860*

History credits Hernando de Soto, in 1541, with being the first European explorer to come within the border of the present state of Louisiana and Robert de LaSalle, in 1682, with being first to reach the mouth of the Mississippi and claim for France and King Louis XIV all of the territory drained by that "Great River". No one hazards a guess as to who the first white man was to venture into the lower Atchafalaya Basin region where Morgan City is located. From all available records, it was the early 18th century before white men managed to traverse the intricate water routes, marshes, swamps and woodlands to arrive at this island which someone dubbed Tiger Island — apparently because a species of wildcat was prevalent here.

While we have scant knowledge of the earliest European visitors to this area, we have a clear picture of the Chitimacha Indians (Chettimanchi, Teutimaca) who made this their home for a thousand years or more before they were disturbed by another race of people. Within St. Mary parish today there is located the only Indian Reservation in Louisiana. It is at Charenton 33 miles west of Morgan City. A few of the once numerous Chitimacha Indians still live on this 265-acre tract set aside for the tribe in 1935 by the United States government after 20 years of negotiation. From present and past generations of these Chitimachas much has been learned of the history and legend of the tribe.

Many of their village sites on the shores of Grand Lake, Bayou Teche, Atchafalaya River, and Bayou Plaquemine have been uncovered. The Chitimacha, who at one time numbered 2000, lived also in villages along Bayous Sorrel, Teche and Chene, Grassy Lake and Lake Palourde and other streams throughout the southeast area of Louisiana from the Mississippi River west to the Teche. They and their western neighbors, the Attakapas Indians, are believed to have been of the same family. The name Attakapas (Atakapa) (Atakapas) means "man eater" in the Choctaw language and indicates the ferocious nature and unsavory reputation of this branch. The Chitimacha were comparatively peaceful. (Their name is thought to be derived from the name "Grand River" in



their tongue or to mean "those who have pots" in Choctaw.) They fished and hunted and did a little farming.

Fish abounded in the waters, deer and wildfowl were plentiful, persimmons, dewberries, muscadines and even sweet potatoes grew wild. The huts in which the Chitimacha lived were constructed of palmetto leaves over a framework of poles. The men wore their hair long and adorned themselves with necklaces, finger rings, bracelets, nose rings and earrings. They tattooed legs, arms and faces in wavy, punctured lines. The warriors of the tribe had knees painted with pulverized charcoal made to stick by scarifying the skin, with the jaw of a small species of garfish, until the skin began to bleed after which the coloring matter was rubbed on. The women wore their hair in plaits or tresses ornamented with plumes—probably from the American egret whose pure white plumage was so popular later with the white settlers that the species almost became extinct.

Fishing in lakes and bayous was done by the women, men and boys who used hook and line or nets woven of vines strung over a round frame and placed at the mouths of bayous or made of slats provided with a funnel-shaped entrance about four feet in diameter or larger.

Boats were essential in this water region. Pirogues were hollowed out of cypress trees. Wooden mortars (also used for grinding corn) were used as pounding tools but fire was the principal means of shaping the hull. A blaze was encouraged by blowing and was checked by mud.

The chief glory of the Chitimacha Indians was their basketry. Woven from wild cane reed in geometrical pattern in red, black and straw color, the complete dyeing processes were their own secret. It is said that the black of the baskets came from the wild walnut; yellow was obtained by treating the young cane with lime and the rich dark red by boiling the lime-treated cane with the roots of a certain wild berry.

Shell mounds were characteristic of the Chitimacha villages. Shellfish from the bayous and lakes constituted a large portion of the food supply so heaps of empty shells collected near camp sites. Prehistoric Indians of this marshy coast are said to have built their camps atop such mounds. The historic tribes (dating from 1700 in Louisiana native Indian records) used the shell mounds for burial grounds.

In 1699 Pierre LeMoyne Sieur d'Iberville—familiarily



known as Iberville—made an alliance with the Chitimacha Indians. This was shortly after Iberville and his brother Bienville arrived (1698) to colonize Louisiana.

In the early 1700s many Chitimachas were enslaved or killed during battles with the French and their Indian allies. By 1784 they were congregated in two villages on Bayou Teche, just west of Morgan City, and on Bayou Lafourche to the east.

Before the American Revolution only a scattered few white men—hunters, traders and missionary priests—found their way to this island. A Catholic church was in existence in 1765 at Le Poste des Attakapas (St. Martinville). Enroute there, missionaries sent from New Orleans must have traveled this way. A few of the Acadians, exiled from their homes in Nova Scotia, may have settled on this island, probably along what are now the St. Mary and Assumption parish shores of Bayou Boeuf. Most of these Acadian refugees, however, came from New Orleans, where they were supplied with tools, livestock and food, to take possession of grants of land along Bayou Teche on the west and Bayou Lafourche east of the Morgan City-Bayou Boeuf area.

The earliest settler in St. Mary is believed to have been Thomas Berwick who was born 1740 in Pennsylvania, and died in Berwick. He was a surveyor in the Opelousas district as early as 1784 and later removed to the lower Atchafalaya region. He was married to Eleanor Wallace who was born in 1748 and died in 1815. They had eight children, among them a son, Joseph. It is apparently this Joseph who is named with his mother, Eleanor, as recipients of a land grant dated July 3, 1797, signed by Baron de Carondelet, transferring to them from Spain "seventy arpents of Tiger Island facing the east bank of the river Teche".

Among other early comers to Tiger Island was Christopher O'Brien, native of County Clare, Ireland. According to his descendants, this O'Brien was here for a short time before 1770 but went back to Virginia to fight in the Revolutionary War. He is believed to have returned to Louisiana in 1801.

Charles Gorsuch Stansbury and his wife Gulaelma Cox are said to have arrived here in 1819. William Collins and his wife, Susana Holton, came from the Carolinas to Louisiana



soon after 1803, settled in Vermilion parish and later moved to St. Mary to make their home first on Bayou Boeuf.

John Mills Bateman is said to have received a land grant of Bateman's Island as payment for services in the War of 1812. He married Mary Vance Hulick of Franklin. (Their portraits hang in the Cabildo in New Orleans.)

In 1819 James Leander Cathcart and James Hutton, Navy Agents, and John Landreth as Surveyor were appointed by John C. Calhoun, U. S. Secretary of War, to make a survey of live oaks and red cedar timber, suitable for the construction of naval vessels, located in the southern sections of the Louisiana and Alabama Territory.

In his diary Cathcart reports that Pierre Moreaux, a native of France, and his wife, native of Berford County, Pa., and two children lived in a cypress hut on a hill of clam shells which bounds an Indian burial ground (mound or midden) at what is now the Old Beach at Lake Palourde. He says they raised red maize, cabbage, garlic, beans and sweet potatoes and had some poultry. Pierre Moreaux is listed in official records as owning a "small plantation in Attakapas in 1819". He had been superintendent of a vacherie (ranch) on lower Bayou Teche before 1812.

Cathcart writes that "Garrett Taylor lived in a house on Lafourche Isle opposite to Moreaux's". In describing the boat trip around Tiger Island he writes that on Bayou Boeuf "steered past a plantation owned by Alex Grassier, a Frenchman and his father-in-law, John Henry", then landed on Tiger Island opposite Cowpen Island (Avoca) to visit the Christi Bryants (Christopher O'Brien, Jr.) who with a Luke Bryant (Christi's brother, according to Cathcart) had fallen heir to 640 acres (the present site of Morgan City) which their father had laid claim to in the Spanish period. Cathcart said "small cane was growing in abundance on the south margin of Tiger Island and at 100 yards distance it was large and impassable; and there was a growth of live oak on the ridges . . . "

Cathcart also reports visiting Samuel Rice's "new house just at the entrance of Berwick Bay which is a bend of the Atchafalaya River". Rice, he said, claimed ownership of Cowpen Island as well as Rice's Island (now Bateman Island) which Samuel Russell Rice, Sr., a native of Kentucky, had



settled on prior to 1803. He had 10 slaves on the plantation in 1813 and was producing sugar by 1816.

Cathcart also visited in Berwick with Joseph Berwick and his "five healthy children". He states that sugar cane was being grown on a small scale on the Berwick Plantation and adds that "the heirs of Thomas Berwick had their claim to 1600 arpents of land (apparently part in Berwick and the other part on Tiger Island) verified Sept. 5, 1811, by the United States."

On St. Mary parish conveyance records Henry Johnson is listed as the owner of this Tiger Island site in 1812 and Bartholemew Robertson owner in 1816.

Soon after 1816 Dr. Walter Brashear, a prominent physician in his day, acquired the site. A native of Maryland, born 1776, Dr. Brashear was a member of one of America's oldest families, descended from Benoit Brassier, of the French house of Brassier, who emigrated to Maryland in 1657. Dr. Brashear's father moved to Kentucky in 1784 and was engaged in farming in Bullit County. Walter was the seventh son and, according to tradition, was intended for a doctor. He attended Transylvania University at Lexington, finished at the age of 20, and then read medicine for two years there. At the end of that time he rode horseback to Philadelphia to attend a course of lectures at the University of Pennsylvania. After a year he shipped to China as surgeon of a vessel.

"In 1809 Dr. Brashear came down to Louisiana from Kentucky. It is written in the family records that "the most magnificent estate in the south is the famous home of the eminent American surgeon, Dr. Walter Brashear, at Belle Isle, La., 18 miles southwest from what is now Morgan City. It was located on Atchafalaya Bay and contained about three thousand acres. The estate was purchased from Francois Gonsoulin in 1809 by Dr. Brashear who came down in a large long flat boat from Louisville. He also purchased Cote Blanche, Grand Cote, Petite Anse and Orange Island. Dr. Brashear is said to have built a sugar mill and to have cut down many trees and turned them into logs which he sold to the government.

"Dr. Brashear also acquired ownership of three large sugar plantations, Tiger Island Plantation, Golden Farm Sugar Plantation in Berwick and Bayou Boeuf Sugar Plantation, eight miles south of Morgan City."



In 1842 Tiger Island sugar plantation was given by Brashear to his sons, Robert B. and Thomas, and daughter, Frances, who married Henry Effingham Lawrence in 1844.

Old maps and family records indicate that Tiger Island in the 1840s had as residents and or landowners the Brashears, Effingham Lawrences, Edwin Stansbury, William and John Collins, Charles Wallis, Andrew and Christopher O'Brien, Jared Young Sanders, (grandfather of Governor Jared Young Sanders), Olympus Young, and Pierre Francioni among others.

There was a Catholic chapel at Bayou Boeuf as early as 1843. There is record also of Cynthia Ann, daughter of Daniel Morrison, "one of the largest land and slave owners in Bayou Boeuf, married May 5, 1841 to Dr. Horatio Nelson Eells, native of East Hartford, Conn. Dr. Eells, a surgeon in the U. S. marine service, is said to have met enroute to Morgan City a group of sugar plantation owners who prevailed upon him to get a release from his government contract and go to Morgan City and Bayou Boeuf 'which he did with success'". The name Schwing also appears as an owner of land on Bayou Boeuf.

On Avoca Island were James Nixon Wofford and his wife, the former Mary Dianna Tabb Cocke. James purchased Avoca in 1843 from his father, William Wofford who had acquired it some 20 years prior from Samuel Russell Rice. Mrs. Wofford is said to have been the one who changed the island's name from Cowpen to Avoca.

Bateman Island was still shown as owned by S. R. Rice. In Berwick the names J. Berwick, Dr. Brashear, and Rentrope appear on maps of the 1840-50 era.

The early 1840s were not prosperous years in St. Mary parish, judging by comments to be found in a few letters still in existence. One written in 1842 says, in part, "All that is talked of nowadays here is the cry of hard times, hard times. The planters nearly all made bad crops and cannot get much for them — and the last news from New Orleans is that the sheriff has shut up six banks . . . and what is to become of us all is hard to tell in such a state of things."

Times were apparently better by the end of the 1840s, however. We read in 1849 issues of the Picayune, New Orleans:

"A great deal of cattle raised in the Opelousas country were brought to Tiger Island to be driven to the Mississippi



for the New Orleans market. On Berwick's Bay, opposite Tiger Island, formed also by Lake Palourde, the Atchafalaya, Bayou Boeuf, Black river, the town site of St. Mary was laid out a quarter of a mile above a large Indian mound, supposedly built centuries before, in which were discovered human bones, potter's ware, etc. Part-blood descendants of the Attakapas Indians (pronounced Tuckapaw) continued to receive rentals on lands leased to whites for 100-year terms." (Circa Sept. 11, 1849, N. O. Picayune).

"Berwick's Bay, 15 fathoms deep, was the harbor for a maritime trade in northern goods and sugar and molasses, which gave St. Mary parish a direct commerce with the North far exceeding that of New Orleans. Many a square-rigged vessel ascended the Atchafalaya and the Teche to a custom-house at Franklin." (N. O. Picayune circa Sept. 11, 1849).

It was the construction of a railroad from Algiers to Berwick's Bay in the 1850s which actually gave birth to the community which was to become Brashear and then Morgan City. Work was started on this link (today the second oldest segment in the Southern Pacific line) in October 1852. About the same time or a little later the owners of Tiger Island Sugar Plantation apparently decided to go into the real estate business. By 1855 R. B. Brashear & Company or Whaley & Brashear were advertising in the Picayune, New Orleans, an offer to "donate 50 to 100 lots to homesteading mechanics, shopkeepers, artisans, etc. in the settlement on Berwick Bay where "speedy growth is a certainty". By Oct. 8, 1855 the government had recognized "the new town of Brashear" as a postoffice and appointed Robert B. Brashear as postmaster. The railroad was completed as far as Bayou Boeuf on Feb. 24, 1856. The New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Company decided that year not to wait on completion of the railroad to the Sabine River to offer transportation service to Texas and made, therefore, an agreement on Nov. 13, 1856, with Cornelius Vanderbilt for steamer service between the terminus of the railroad "now at Bayou Boeuf and hereafter to be at Berwick's Bay" and Galveston, Texas. The first sidewheeler, GALVESTON, was placed in service April 1, 1857 and the second, OPELOUSAS, was added in May, a month after the road was completed the entire 80-1/5 miles from Algiers to Brashear. A semi-weekly boat train, matching the ship's schedule, in addition to regular daily train from New



Orleans, was inaugurated. Connections were also available with New Iberia and other points on Bayou Teche by means of sternwheelers.

A town grew rapidly where a few years before there were only cane fields. In 1857 cattle pens to take care of livestock shipments from Texas, dormitories for the train crews, a house for the station agent, sidetracks, turntable, and other facilities were built here. Homes and business places sprang up on either side of the railroad tracks which were located then approximately where they are today. Eugene Daly, L. Laforest, Leopold Loeb, Colonel Zebulon Gathright, Antonio Vitterman, the Brashears and Lawrences, Stansburys, O'Briens, and other pioneer families here left their mark on the town and their names on business and social records of the day. By 1859 there were 40 homes on the town-site. On January 13 of that year the first Mass was celebrated here by Father Justin Joseph Clavis in a private home. That same month he purchased a home and christened it St. Justin's Chapel - - the first Catholic church in Brashear. (It was destroyed by fire June 5th or 6th of that year).

When the State of Louisiana was asked in 1860 to pass an act incorporating the town of Brashear in the Parish of St. Mary, its boundaries were defined as follows: All that tract or parcel of ground in the parish of St. Mary, beginning at and upon the margin of the east bank of Berwick's Bay, and running thence along and with the North line of Brashear Avenue to the boundary line of lands belonging to Olympus Young; thence following the said boundary line southward to Bayou Boeuf; thence along the shore or margin of Bayou Boeuf to Berwick's Bay and along the margin of Berwick's Bay to the place of beginning.

The Town of Brashear was officially in existence "as a body politic" on March 8, 1860.



## *The Civil War*

Brashear City, as Morgan City was then known, was embroiled in the Civil War from the very beginning of hostilities.

As western terminus of the only line of railway in southern Louisiana and a port on the Atchafalaya River, a main artery of traffic into the interior of Louisiana and west to Texas, Brashear figured prominently in campaign plans on both sides and ended up battle-scarred from actual warfare on its site and ravaged and weary from constant occupation by troops.

Five days after war was declared on April 12, 1861, the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Railroad, which extended from Algiers to the infant town of Brashear on Berwick's Bay, was giving free passage to men joining up with the Confederacy and for the transport of munitions of war. During the next year, the railroad managed to provide nearly \$18,000 worth of free transportation in the interest of the Confederacy. On May 1, 1862 the NOO&GW was taken over by the Union Army's 21st Indiana Regiment under the command of Colonel J. McMillan.

A few days later a company of Confederate rangers from St. Martinville captured the train at Bayou Boeuf. The rangers tore off a portion of the track near Avondale and returned to Berwick's Bay, burning the Des Allemands, Lafourche and Boeuf bridges behind them. It was not until November 1862 that the Northern Army gained complete control of the railroad but from then on it was operated by and for the exclusive use of the military authorities until 1866.

Preparing in 1861 for war, the Confederate forces erected three forts in the immediate vicinity of Brashear. One was Fort Berwick, across the bay and about four miles from Brashear, another was Fort Chene, eight miles to the south and the third, Fort Bisland, located near Patterson about where the H. P. Williams Airport is today.

In a report to headquarters, First Division La., Volunteer Infantry, New Orleans on Sept. 12, 1861, Major General John L. Lewis, division commander, refers to Forts Berwick and Chene as follows:



"Fort Berwick is situated about 4 miles from Brashear City, at the junction of Wax Bayou and the Atchafalaya River. The depth of water on the bar of Wax Bayou, as I was informed, is about 7 feet. The fort is a common earthen one, quadrangular in shape, with earthen parapets 5 feet high on three sides, the rear being protected only by palisades about 7 feet high, loop-holed for musketry, the whole surrounded by a moat about 6 feet wide in front and 3 feet in the rear. On the front face two 24-pounder pivot guns are mounted, which command the outlet of Wax Bayou, where boats of only very light draught can be used, but which would be of little avail in protecting the Atchafalaya.

"To render Fort Berwick capable of resisting only a moderate force the parapets would require strengthening. The magazine also requires protection, which can be done by covering the same with earth to the thickness of several feet. I would recommend three additional guns being sent to Fort Berwick to arm the right and left parapets, which are at present defenseless; also a light gun (9 or 12 pounder) to aid in protecting the rear, which is open to attack by land forces.

"The ammunition consists of 21 24-pounder cartridges, 200 shot, and 4,000 musket-ball cartridges. Rammers, port-fires, primers, and flannel for cartridges and swabs are much needed; but I do not enter into the particulars, as I am assured a list has already been furnished by the officer in command. The garrison consists of two companies, one of infantry and one of sappers and miners.

"Fort Chene is in all respects a counterpart of Fort Berwick, situated at a point commanding two bayous, admitting only vessels of light draught of water, and consequently of much less importance than Fort Berwick. The armament is two 24-pounder pivot guns. The ammunition consists of 90 24-pounder cartridges, 193 shot, 30 charges of canister, and 3,000 musket cartridges. The garrison consists of one company of infantry.

"I would also call your attention to the companies composing the garrisons of Forts Berwick and Chene. They are infantry, some of which, especially in Fort Berwick, are but imperfectly acquainted with the musket exercise, while all, both officers and men, are entirely ignorant of the management of heavy artillery. A competent instructor of artillery is a most pressing necessity.



"The great number of fishermen, or men of doubtful avocations, who reside in the numerous bayous, quite out of reach of the forts, renders a coast guard necessary. The steamer MOBILE, which is now being altered into a gunboat, will not be ready for two weeks, and I would recommend the employment in the meantime of Captain's Carr's steamer, the TEAZER, and which, being of light draught of water, could act as a tender to the MOBILE, and render effective service in clearing the bayous of all such as may be rendering aid and comfort to the enemy. I would also urge the employment of Captain Carr upon this service, for which his intimate knowledge of Berwick Bay and its bayous make him so well fitted.

"The commanders of the forts have represented to me the necessity, to the proper carrying out of their duty in preventing the passage of small craft, that each be supplied with a 6 or 9 oared barge, the small boats they are at present using being loaned them by citizens.

"Permit me to again call your attention to the serious results that would arise from this point falling into the hands of the enemy. We should be completely cut off from the valuable supply of cattle from Texas, while 60,000 barrels of coal, which is an article of almost incalculable advantage to the enemy's shipping, would be sacrificed. No time or means ought, therefore, to be lost in properly defending a point of so much importance."

On December 5, 1861, the Confederates were ready for action in St. Mary Parish, one of the densely slave-populated sections of the state. A regiment of 1,000 men was at the Atchafalaya. One company was assigned to Fort Berwick and one company at Fort Chene. A main channel of the Atchafalaya was ordered to be filled by sinking live oak trees, leaving open only an eighty foot entrance. Flatboats of more trees were kept close by in case the entire entrance needed to be closed.

With the fall of New Orleans to the enemy on April 25, 1862, Confederate authority in Louisiana virtually ceased. Fortifications at Berwick Bay (Brashear) and other Gulf Coast points were abandoned, the garrisons withdrawn, works dismantled and guns thrown into the water. (Many were later salvaged.)

The Union forces erected two sizable forts and had several smaller "works" here. According to official records,



the larger of the two forts was Fort Brashear. (In the memory of local citizens and in a history by a former mayor of Morgan City in 1876 and a visitor here in later years, Fort Brashear is called Fort Star (Starr) and is described as star-shaped earthwork with walls thirty feet above the ground, garrisoned in 1863 by 3000 infantry—mostly colored regiments.)

Official War of the Rebellion reports refer to the Federal fortifications on Berwick's Bay as follows:

" . . . Fort Brashear within the southern limits of present Morgan City was a four sided bastioned work with strong profile. Its artillery consisted of 5 thirty-two pounders, 1 forty-two pounder, 3 twenty-four pounders, and 2 twelve-pounders, and it was equipped with good magazines. The length of the interior crest of the parapet was 465 yards, and it could contain its complement of 450 soldiers. Twenty thousand rations were stored there. It was covered by outposts.

"Fort Buchanan, fully a mile north of Fort Brashear, and on the river bank opposite the mouth of the Teche was the more neglected of the two during the Civil War. It was constructed to mount more guns. The works cover about half an acre . . . .

"At Berwick City, across the Bay from Morgan City there was also a bridge-head earthwork.

"The works controlled the Atchafalaya Basin during the early years of the war and changed hands between the contending forces more than once.

"After the fall of Port Hudson and the advance up the Red River their importance ceased. They were the scene of many brilliant attacks by forces under Gen. Dick Taylor."

Entrenchments were placed at Brashear City by the Federals early in 1862 to prevent the Confederates from attacking General Godfrey Weitzel who occupied the LaFourche territory. The Federal army under General Weitzel had invaded South Louisiana with 4,000 men. Thibodaux was captured on August 28, 1862. The Catholic church pastor of Thibodaux, Father Menard, talked the Union General into protecting the church from raiding by the soldiers. The G. B. Thibodeaux family provided a large, brick building in which Father Menard and the women of the town established a hospital. The Sisters of Mount Carmel served in the hospital as nurses and cooks for the sick and wounded soldiers.



The people of Franklin and Bayou Boeuf were not so fortunate, however. Union soldiers burned the Chapel at Bayou Boeuf and destroyed all the church records. The Federals seized the priest's home in Franklin.

On October 27, 1862, Brashear witnessed the arrival of a weary group of 1392 Confederate soldiers, commanded by General Alfred Mouton, in a retreat before a vastly superior force of Union soldiers under Gen. Weitzel. General Mouton, acting under orders from General Richard Taylor who commanded the District of West Louisiana, crossed his men safely over the river and entrenched them at Fort Bisland. (The Union forces were now under the Command of Major Banks who replaced Major Ben Butler.)

The following letter told of the situation in St. Mary Parish in November of 1862. William Bonner in Bastrop, Louisiana, wrote to his mother:

"I received a letter from John at the same time he was at Camp Bisland in the Parish of St. Mary's he is much dissatisfied with officers and mess and wishes he was back with Bragg he had several attacks of chill and fever, but was then well.

"He says there is quite a pumice of the state, great numbers are moving west, with there (sic) negroes, leaving there (sic) farms and crops behind those that remain and take oath, have to pay there (sic) negroes ten dollars per month and then give one third of there (sic) sugar to Butler, such is the fate of the people in the lower portion of the state. And I am afraid a similar fate awaits us in the event Vicksburg falls."

Only minor skirmishes occurred here during the winter months of 1862-1863 while the Union Army was quietly concentrating in the Brashear area for an all-out attempt to capture the small Confederate army and march on into Texas, thereby destroying the Confederate supply line from the west and Mexico.

In January, 1863, two Confederate ships engaged in a battle near Pelican Island with three Federal battleships, the HARRIET LANE, the CLIFTON, and the WESTFIELD. The Confederates destroyed them and forced the crews to surrender. An explosion on the WESTFIELD caused the loss of its commander, other officers, and several men. The Confederates took the remaining men prisoners.



Wanting to cease the depredations of the Confederate steamer, the J. A. COTTON, on Bayou Teche, General Banks advanced from Thibodaux with the following forces: Boats DIANA, KINSMEN, ESTRELLA, and CALHOUN; the 6th Michigan, 8th Vermont, 12th Connecticut, 16th and 75th New York, and 21st Indiana infantry regiments; the 1st Louisiana cavalry, the 1st Maine, the 4th and 6th Massachusetts artillery. The J. A. COTTON faced so much trouble at Pattersonville that she was forced to retire up the Atchafalaya. The battle was won by the Federals.

The people of Brashear must have watched with dire forebodings as the Union forces brought in swelled to 16,000 men by March 28, 1863. They observed, too, an increase in gunboats on the river.

Grover's Division of the Federal Army marched from Donaldsonville to Thibodaux, to Bayou Boeuf and Brashear City. There the divisions of Generals Emory, Grover, and Weitzel were united under Major-General Banks on March 28, 1863. In a letter written back home, a Union soldier stated that this combined force was the largest of all Federal forces. It included 24,000 infantry (other references say 15,000) seven or eight batteries; besides some cavalry. He said they were camped in Brashear City where the corn and potatoes were growing, but there were no gardens in the town.

Across the Atchafalaya from Banks were 3,000 Confederate soldiers. Taylor's main body was located at Fort Bisland. Banks moved 10,000 men under Weitzel and Emory across Berwick Bay to march to Bisland for a frontal attack on Taylor's men. Five thousand Federals were transported on gunboats via Grand Lake with orders to march into Franklin and intercept the retreat of the Confederates.

On the same night, General Taylor received word of the Federal movement. He immediately began a retreat to Franklin. One wing of the Confederates held back the Federals in front and the left wing interfered with the force coming from Oaklawn. Taylor was not only successful in evading the trap, he is credited with thereby saving Texas from invasion.

The Federals suffered much heavier losses than the Confederates in this engagement near Franklin, called the Battle of Irish Bend by the Federals and the Battle of Nerson Woods by the Confederates. That battle has also been referred to



as the Battle of Franklin and the Battle of Fort Bisland. No matter what the name, it was one of the most important battles in this area.

A report by Banks at that time showed that the Federals were bragging about the treasure trove uncovered in Brashear City. “. . . General Banks aided by the gallant Farragut, has not only disorganized and put to flight the whole rebel army west of the Mississippi River, from New Orleans to Alexandria, on the Red River, but opened up untold mines of wealth to the treasury of the United States. Almost hourly vessels are to be seen coming down the bay freighted with mountain loads of the precious materials of the regions just regained by our arms—cotton, hogsheads of sugar, and countless herds of mules and cattle.

“The treasures already discharged upon the landing of Brashear City up to this date (May 11) would amount to many hundred thousands of dollars; while this is but an installment of what remains behind, and which can only be counted by millions of dollars.

“One significant fact has also been laid bare to the outer world by the probing of our bayonets; and that is, that the planters in the newly-overrun regions had not the amount of “patriotism” which the rebel leaders either supposed or pretended they had—and which too many people in the North and abroad believed—and did not quite see the necessity of consigning to flames all the wealth they possessed in the world, merely for the sake of proving their devotion to the cause of Jeff Davis & Co.

“Wherever our armies have penetrated they have found cotton and sugar carefully concealed in all sorts of remote corners; and as they seize these costly products a receipt is given to the owners, upon a fair valuation, in case they should hereafter be able to prove themselves of loyal antecedents, the onus probandi being entirely on the planter.

“If any thing more were wanted to utterly overthrow the value of Confederate credit, and to prove to the gullible people of Europe that they have been making a bad bargain with traitors in this country, it will be found in Uncle Sam’s so unceremoniously holding the very materials upon which the lenders have been staking their money. What Confederate credit was worth previous to this new and irreparable inroad upon it may be gleaned from the fact that our soldiers, in



parley with rebel pickers, could at any time have received ten dollars of Confederate trash for one dollar of Uncle Sam's good, honest greenbacks."

An event in St. Mary which at the time seemed even more significant than the Battle of Bisland occurred on June 23, 1863, when General Taylor conceived and executed a brilliant plan to recapture Brashear. Taylor's ambition was to take possession of the Lafourche district and then to attack New Orleans should opportunity present itself, but first to seize Brashear from the enemy. James B. Major's cavalry from Texas was ordered to march to Donaldsonville, down Bayou Lafourche to Thibodaux and then to the Boeuf to gain the rear of Brashear.

Taylor instructed Major to have his men attack on June 23rd when they heard the sound of gunfire opened by Generals Mouton and Green. On June 22nd Taylor arrived south of Bisland at Mouton's camp. After nightfall 300 men under Major Sherod Hunter embarked in boats of all description on the Teche, entered the Atchafalaya and landed on Tiger Island about a mile from the railroad.

During the night Green advanced 500 men and artillery to a point on the Berwick shore opposite a Federal gunboat in Berwick Bay and the Brashear railway station. At dawn his heavy guns opened fire. Simultaneously, Hunt and Major attacked. The Federals, taken completely by surprise, surrendered after only a short struggle. Only a train of three engines and several carriages escaped but not for long as the train was stopped at the Boeuf where the Confederates had captured the bridge.

Generals Taylor and Green crossed over from Berwick in a pirogue and their men in skiffs, their horses swimming alongside. The wildest confusion and excitement existed in Brashear where the sight of all the captured loot made a tremendous impression on hungry Confederate soldiers.

The spoils were most important—12 guns (thirty-two's and twenty-four's) many small arms and accouterments, great quantities of quartermaster, commissary, produce and medical stores. With this success, the Confederates had war materials for the remainder of 1863 and for the Red River campaign of 1864. A Federal account of the battle says that General Banks meant to have broken up the great depot of military stores at Brashear and to have removed them to Algiers or



New Orleans but for some reason his orders were not carried out.

Taylor's men went undisturbed for days while they moved out all of the captured supplies. They then burnt the rolling stock of the railroad and ran the engines into the bay. After which they safely withdrew to the west bank of the Atchafalaya and went into camp on the Teche, abandoning Brashear to the Federals who returned July 25 to regain the town and held it then until the war's end.

Activity was scattered and limited in this area during 1864 and 1865. Only minor skirmishes occurred near Berwick and Pattersonville.

Interesting to note are such incidents as the following:

"On May 18, 1864 General Taylor issued an order to the people of the Parish of St. Mary. Hoping to reinforce his inadequate forces, the general declared that any person who owed military service to the Confederate States, and was not in the army, should join the Louisiana Infantry on or before June 1, 1864. Any person who failed to do so would be shot to death on sight."

Whether or not the order did any good is not known. It is written, however, in a report dated May 25, 1864, that the Yankees outnumbered the Confederates ten to one in Franklin . . . but the loss of the Confederates was smaller.

The pattern of life was changed in St. Mary as it was throughout the south by the civil strife. Plantations and homes were destroyed or seized and used as quarters or hospitals. Horses, mules and forage were carried away. Negroes were forced to leave the plantations and work for the Union army.

Brashear City felt keenly the economic privations of the war. Some of its residents fled in advance of the conflict to Mexico. On their return many found only wreckage or ashes of their places of business or homes. There is a complete dearth of official city or other records which would indicate that none were kept or they were burned or otherwise destroyed. There remain, however, documents written after the war asking the United States government for compensation for the loss of property here.



## *Morgan City From 1865 To 1920*

Fifty-five years in the history of a community as colorful and ever-changing as Morgan City cannot be covered completely in one chapter. Only high lights of church, school and community life are presented here. Additional information on this period will be found in subsequent chapters.

There was nothing lively about business or society in the days immediately following the Civil War. Many families who left here in '61 to go to Mexico or other places for the duration of the conflict returned to find their homes and places of business in ruins. They and the Brashear residents who stayed and had their properties confiscated or destroyed before their very eyes had to set about the arduous task of rebuilding and making a recovery from the havoc of war.

Typical of war claims filed then, and pressed for years in many cases, was one seeking compensation for "sugars, molasses, corn, hay, fodder, mules, horses, cows, calves, and other items taken from the Louis Laforest plantation and store. (The store of Laforest was one of the first commercial buildings in town. It was located on the shore of Berwick Bay on the south of and practically alongside the train rails.) According to a petition of E. A. Landry, grandson of Laforest, "General B. F. Butler's military orders were in full forces over Laforest property; half-grown cane was destroyed and fields and pastures were encamped on; the sugar house shed was taken to repair the railroad bridges; property was seized for military necessity from about August to November 1862; buildings were destroyed by fire in April 1863; General N. P. Banks relieved General Butler in December 1862; General Godfrey Weitzel was in command of West Louisiana, the richest portion where crops and houses were all taken for benefit of the military; several hundred hogsheads of sugar were taken and shipped to New York. . . ."

In March, 1866, Brashear Mayor J. P. Walters was authorized by his council and given \$25 expense money to go to "the city" to ask that in return for the "destruction of public buildings and property during the military occupation of this place that houses built for the troops and other buildings now



in use by soldiers be turned over to Brashear as compensation.

In an early history of the town, it is said that "in 1866 there were five stores, two coffee houses, one tailor and one shoemaker in Brashear."

Old records of town council meetings establish the fact that during the years 1865 to 1870 the following men were among those living in Brashear (in addition to early settlers mentioned in a previous chapter): J. P. Walter, F. J. Gremeaud, Eddy Luce, William Costello, E. F. Tinier, J. Y. Winter, Wm. Knight, B. P. Vinson, Wm. Crumpton, John Y. Crank, Theodore Blanchard, George F. White, Victor LaBauve, A. Cardillac, Cahun, Blanchard, Payne, V. Chase, H. E. Henning, Beverly and Nathan Berwick, Dr. R. C. White, S. F. Marks, C. Pierce, J. Benson, J. Nugier, A. Cooper, H. Erp, Wm. Hanchett, M. Goldstein, A. Ross, I. Lehmann, T. J. Royster, W. Williams, T. O. Mamis, G. Raymond, T. J. Verrett, R. Maguire, C. E. Mino, J. Bergeron, F. O'Brien, W. S. Hamilton, O. Landry, C. LeBlanc, D. Bedell, J. H. Handy, J. Newton, W. B. Merchant, A. Boudoin, Charles Boudreaux, P. C. Nicod, McClellan, McChesnut, D. W. Roberts, James Costello, Mathius Kahn, A. E. Eues, E. Petete, O. Ditch, Gougenheim, John Perilac, J. M. O'Neil, C. B. Darrell, Aron Smith, I. Heyman, John Vanslyke, F. N. Hooper, Ed Fowler, James R. Jolley and M. C. Husband. (The names in the records are not always legible. The list is compiled from elected or appointed town officials, men who appeared before a meeting, or had business with the Town and, in one instance, those who voted in an election.)

Mayor J. S. Gotcher and his council—J. A. O'Neill, P. Dalton, H. E. Henning, G. Vignes, and N. Chesnut—had voted in 1861 to grant the sum of \$500 to the directors of the Second School District, "said sum to be applied by them toward erection of a suitable building in the town square for a public school house provided that said school directors first raised by subscription or otherwise an equal sum to be applied to the same purpose." We do not know whether that plan was carried out but it is a matter of record that in the 1860s there was a building at this location serving both as a school and a Union Protestant church. Presbyterians, for example, held services there. They had been organized here "some-time before 1860."



The Catholics in Brashear depended on services of priests making occasional visits from Bayou Boeuf, Chacahoula, and Thibodaux. Among them were Father Justin Claris, who on the 13th day of January, 1859, signed himself "Parish Priest of Chacahoula, Bayou Boeuf and Brashear." He celebrated Mass at first in a private home but on January 27, 1859, said his second Mass "in a house by himself bought, in which he arranged a chapel measuring 30' x 16', placing it under the name and protection of St. Justin, Martyr." This was the first Catholic Church in Brashear. During the night of June 6, 1859, fire razed the chapel and presbytery at the Brashear settlement. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered up at intervals in private houses by the various priests in charge of Bayou Boeuf or Thibodaux. These included Fathers Claris, Pineau, Urquain, and Letilly.

Floods in 1865 and 1867, caused by breaks in the Mississippi levees which had been neglected during the war, were temporary set backs to Brashear's progress. The year 1867 also brought a disastrous yellow fever epidemic to a large area from New Orleans to Galveston including Brashear and many points along the route of the railroad and steamship service. Some sixty-six persons died here from the fever.

Newspapers of that day carried many dire reports of that year. In addition to write-ups of the overflow and epidemic, there were accounts of accidents, one of which was suffered by a "Mr. Stansbury who was severely injured by the accidental discharge of a gun while hunting a bear which appeared in the area."

In spite of conditions in 1867, Father Claude Fabre, assistant priest at Thibodaux, and Captain M. Carr, railroad agent at Brashear, began a drive for funds to erect a Catholic church here. A lot had been purchased in 1866 from the Brashears by Archbishop Odin for the sum of \$1200. It was located on the southwest corner of a fine lot on south Railroad Avenue. A committee composed of Rene Macready, Carr, A. Vitterman, L. Laforest and A. Joret continued the appeal for subscription to the fund and by May, 1868, actual work began on the new chapel measuring 22' x 40'. It was completed in July and blessed August 2 by Father Fabre, assisted by Father Kenney, who delivered the address. This, the second Catholic church here, was placed under the patronage of St. Clothilda, Queen of France.



The first marriage recorded at Brashear was that of Clairville LeBlanc to Miss Evelyn Templet on January 15, 1867.

The first baptism was dated July 10, 1868. The child baptised was Rose Mynor, daughter of probably (Phil) Mynor and Mary McLaughlin. The sponsors were John and Mary Costello.

In 1869 an event transpired which gave new impetus to growth in Brashear. Following the war, railroad bridges and road equipment had to be repaired and the channel of the Atchafalaya Bay cleared of a barricade of timbers and trees which had been laid down as defense during the war. By 1869 the NOO&GW company had the road repaired and equipped, emigration to Texas was increasing and sixty-three miles of rails on the west of Berwick Bay to Vermilionville were graded and ready for track laying, but expenses had been too great. The railroad was offered to the highest bidder at a U. S. Marshal's sale. Charles Morgan became the purchaser of the road and all its equipment, changing the railroad's name to the Morgan Line and operating it in conjunction with his steamship service from Brashear to Gulf coast ports. His representative, Rene Macready, appeared before Mayor A. Cardillac and his council, Nathan Berwick, William Costello, A. Vitterman, Jacques Boudier, and William B. Merchant, with a petition on July 24, 1869, asking permission to construct six hundred fifty feet of wharves, a double track or turntable for the railroad, storage sheds, cattle pens and other improvements here at Morgan's Louisiana and Texas Railroad's expense. The petition set forth the view that "in a few years Brashear will be placed in competition with the largest cities in the state, if not in the union and the world."

The 1870s were a decade of steady growth and development interrupted by a flood in 1874 and the horrors of the yellow fever infestation in 1878.

Most of the following information is taken from historical notes by the Honorable C. H. St. Clair who came to this port in 1872 and lived the rest of his life here. He was a mayor for two terms.

St. Clothilda Catholic Church at Brashear had been officially designated a parish by Archbishop Perches in June, 1870. Father Mathrin Chopin was named first resident priest.

The first newspaper published in Brashear seems to have been the Attakapas Register in 1867 published by Dewitt



C. Roberts. The Brashear Printing and Publishing Company began here in October, 1872, publishing a paper named THE BRASHEAR NEWS. Rene Macready was one of the founders of the NEWS. Copies of the BRASHEAR NEWS dating until November 13, 1875, are in existence.

On February 25, 1873, an act of Congress approved the enlargement of the Collection District of the Teche and required the tax collector to reside in Brashear, thus making Brashear a Port of Entry. The collector's salary was set at one thousand dollars annually. He superintended the following lighthouses: Timbalier, Ship Shoal, Southwest reef, and Calcasieu." Under the new law R. W. Mullen was the first collector; E. Wells, the second collector; and J. R. Jolley, the third collector.

The Charles Whitney Fire Co., No. 1, was incorporated January 2, 1873. The following year, on March 12, the Charles Morgan Hook and Ladder Co. was organized. A lively interest was taken in all matters pertaining to a fire department, and a city fire association was formed. A Board of Delegates composed of T. W. Nelson, O. Ditch, Charles Peterson, Harry Smith, A. Ermann and Henry Newberger was chosen. Officers of the board were L. W. Nelson, pres.; A. Joseph, Sr., chief engineer; and Dave Connors, second assistant.

Charles Morgan Hook & Ladder Co. No. 1 had Charles Miller as president, Dr. A. E. Eves, vice president, C. H. St. Clair, secretary, and E. J. Stansbury, foreman. A yearly parade was held when the ladies decorated the machines and at night a great ball was given, a band being brought from New Orleans for the occasion. A young daughter of J. Bourdier was made godmother for the Hook and Ladder Co. and the truck was christened "Lucille" in her honor. The balls at that time were held in the Railroad depot, a very large building standing at the waters edge. (In 1889 this building was destroyed by fire. At the same time the railroad and steamship offices were robbed and set on fire. The big safe was stolen and never found.) At the time the Morgan Line steamships running from this port to Texas and Mexican ports included the HARLAN, JOSEPHINE, CLINTON, I. C. HARRIS, ST. MARY, HUTCHINSON, W. G. HEWES, GUSSIE, CITY OF NORFOLK, MORGAN, WHITNEY, and ARANSAS.



On January 1, 1874, James R. Jolley was editing the ATTAKAPAS REGISTER at Brashear. This paper continued in existence until 1878 when the name was changed to the MORGAN CITY REVIEW. Various editors were in charge of the papers, but J. R. Jolley was owner from 1872 until 1914. (In 1914 THE REVIEW merged with THE BULLETIN and a short while later the combine was sold to the Morgan City Publishing Company. C. E. King came here as managing editor in 1916. When King-Hannaford Co., Inc. was organized in 1919, during the time the THE DAILY MORGAN CITY REVIEW was being published, Mr. King was made president and remains in that office and principal stockholder of the corporation today.)

Congregation "Shaare Zedek" was dedicated June 26, 1875, with Issac Reinauer as president and the late Leopold Loeb as Rabbi or Reader. The first Temple, erected on First Street, was sold and a new Temple, the present one, erected in 1928 on a Third Street site donated by the late Maurice E. Norman.

Leopold Loeb continued to officiate as Reader and acting Rabbi to the Congregation until his death in 1921.

Shortly after coming to this port in 1872, C. H. St. Clair became interested in a project to build a parsonage and chapel for the Episcopal church. He enlisted the help of a few others and then proceeded to purchase of Mr. Isaac Lewis a lot for the purpose located on the southeast corner of Greenwood and Second Streets. On this lot he caused to be erected a suitable building for a parsonage, omitting only the partitions. He assumed all liability for cost of materials and labor and completed the work with assistance from Mr. Charles Morgan, Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Whitney, Mrs. Amelia Griffith Mentz, A. C. Hutchinson, Miss Lydia Lawrence and a few others. For two years a school, both day and Sunday, was maintained in the new building, the teacher being Professor A. B. Hoskyns.

Preparations were made to build a church here for the Methodist Episcopal Church Society in May, 1876. By an act of incorporation Messrs. Hankins and Hamilton were made trustees. The church was erected on the corner of Federal Avenue and Everett Streets. It was later named Pharr Chapel



in honor of Capt. J. N. Pharr who purchased and gave the land upon which the church was built.

In 1876 the Union Protestant church building was purchased by the First Presbyterian Church of Morgan City and moved to its lot No. 6, Square 14 on Federal Avenue. The building was purchased at Sheriff's Sale. Later it was sold at sheriff's sale to Messrs. T. W. Nelson, C. Miller, J. J. Greenwood, John Hanson, and Captain R. Miller, trustees of the Presbyterian association. These men moved it to Federal Avenue, corner of Dupre; enlarging the building and adding a steeple. It was dedicated by the Rev. Mr. Markham.

Besides the above churches the colored population had Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church near Bayou Boeuf, Rev. I. Lawson, pastor; Mount Zion Baptist, Duke Street, Rev. J. Wilson, pastor; Free Mission Baptist, Bayou Boeuf, Rev. J. D. Dorsey; Union Chapel on Third Street between Freret and Greenwood, Rev. R. W. Overton, pastor.

The Benevolent Associations were Doric Lodge No. 205, F and A. M., Masonic Hall on Second Street, William Drews, Sr., W. M.; Antoine Conclave F. and A. M. (colored), Federal Avenue; Joshua Thomas, W. M.

Also Aurora Lodge No. 6, Independent Order of Good Templars meeting in Temperance Hall, Second Street, M. I. Hamilton, P. W. C. T.; St. Mary's Lodge, I. O. O. F., No. 4, Edgar Bass, N. G., N. A. Roach, V. G., C. S. Wilson, secretary, E. W. Halbrock, treasurer. The colored United Bros. Association met in Mount Pilgrim Church, D. Thorn, president. Also United Sons Benevolent Association, colored, had N. Brown as president.

"By 1875 Brashear had a population of more than 3,000 people, about 800 houses, five churches, five schools, one Masonic lodge, two fire companies, two newspapers, one social club, one moss factory, one sash, door and blind factory, four steam sawmills within a short distance, one ice house, one custom house, three drug stores, 50 wholesale or retail stores, 15 coffee shops, five billiard rooms, three bakeries, and 17 vessels in active operation between Brashear and Texas, New York, Havana, Cuba, and ports of Mexico and Central America on regular sailing," Emerson Bentley reported in THE BRASHEAR NEWS.

During the early summer of 1875, a group of citizens



opened a road to Lake Palourde. R. B. Lawrence leased some land and a pleasure resort was built. The plan failed in a short time because the land was not owned by Lawrence and it was outside the city limits where the police had no authority, St. Clair's history relates.

In May, 1876, a committee of the council, Messrs. W. B. Merchant, John Vanslyke, and Jacques Wildenstein, with Mrs. Frances Lawrence, principal, J. E. Lawrence and R. B. Lawrence witnesses, and the Lawrence family drew up and signed an agreement before Recorder J. S. Parkerson. The document read in part, "Personally appeared Mrs. F. Brashear, widow of Henry E. Lawrence of the Parish of St. Mary, who declared that being moved by a worthy pride and the interest they have in the town and the people of the town of Brashear now changed to Morgan City, and various other good causes now moving them thereto they did and do hereby make a donation to the said town and the citizens thereof by giving, granting, conveying and delivering in full the following described property to wit:

"That certain square of land lying and being situated in said town, being square on block No. 27 according to Barnes' plan containing and comprising lots No. 1 to 13 inclusive. One of the express conditions of the donations is that said square shall be named and known as 'Lawrence Park' and that the same shall forever be used exclusively for a public park, not to be built upon or used in any manner other than a resort for the people, and not to be alienated, mortgaged or encumbered in any manner whatever by the municipal authorities of said city, and in case of violation of these stipulations, the property to revert to the donors and their heirs."

G. W. R. Bailey, Esq., holding a claim against this square, donated it, and free of all encumbrances, it was received by the city. It was valued at \$4000 at that time.

On July 4, 1876, a national centennial celebration was held in this park. Mayor St. Clair appointed the following committee, who had the matter in charge: Emerson Bentley, Pierre Lahitte, Charles Miller, James Costello, Wm. Martin, D. Conners, T. W. Nelson, O. Ditch, L. Loeb, Wm. Jones, J. Thomas, and E. A. Landry. A great platform was erected and seats provided; a salute of thirteen guns was fired at sunrise and another at noon, with all the bells in the city ringing. At the meeting the mayor presided. The opening



address was made by the Rev. Father Chopin. Reading of the Declaration of Independence by D. M. Heard; reading of the town's history by S. Lanaux, data furnished by Mrs. Sophie Duay, speeches by B. F. Winchester and Emerson Bentley, and music by the Silver Cornet, Band, and grand display of fire works in the evening made up the program. About 500 people were present.

Charles Miller had a library of 1500 volumes of all classes of literature. Those books were open to the public at a fair price.

Wide streets, shelled, and plank walks lighted at night by street lamps under private control were conveniences for the public during all weathers.

The ML&T had a zoo and park on the depot grounds. "Oneonta", as the park was named, contained statuary and various caged wildlife. Next to the depot was "Brown's Lunch". This was a little place where the passengers obtained food and refreshments during their ten minute stop. Baron Randolph Natili was the ML&T agent at Morgan City responsible for the park.

Mayor T. W. Nelson's administration financed the construction of a building on the west side of the public square for a courthouse and jail. Mr. Gus Drews erected on the northeast corner of said square a two-story building for an engine house and meeting room for the firemen and various societies. Other buildings on this square were a house for the Hook & Ladder Co. and the Public Market. The hand fire engines having been found too small for the fast growing town, a beautiful Silsby steam fire engine, with hose and horse carts was bought, and almost entirely paid for by subscription, and by the efforts of the ladies, who organized a "Fire Brigade," and gave entertainments, devoting the gains to the payment of the debt on the engine.

This engine was, with great ceremony, christened "Alice W." in honor of the lovely young daughter of Mayor J. H. Wise. Later this engine, the house and all belongings were destroyed by fire supposed to have been accidentally set by a half-demented Negro, who was allowed to sleep in the building, the firemen losing all their books, flags, banners, and souvenirs, which they prized so highly. Later a larger and more powerful steam engine was purchased, with full equip-



ment, and paid for by the citizens voting a five mill tax for ten years for that purpose, and was named "Bernice," in honor of the youngest daughter of A. A. Ozenne.

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In July 1878 yellow fever was reported to be in New Orleans. A quarantine was established, and all possible precautions taken but early in August a Norwegian sailor, named Neil C. Hansen (supposed to be immune) brought the fever to Morgan City where it raged for four months. Scarcely a family escaped the disease. No pen can describe the horrors of that time. The fever spread and deaths followed rapidly. "Morgan City, heretofore always healthy, had no cemetery, burials having been made in Berwick, across the bay," St. Clair wrote. Berwick quarantined against Morgan City. Hence, the first to die in Morgan City were buried in the street "back of town" between Freret and Greenwood Streets. Relief committees were formed. Nurses and physicians were sent for, and all done that was possible to do. Yet the fever raged, relief committees and doctors went down in death, citizens fled to the Gulf and to the swamps; all business and all traffic was suspended, food, medicines, and clothing were sent to Morgan City from other parts of this state and from other states; \$600 was borrowed by the Mayor from the Morgan Line, and with that money the Mayor and Mr. August Joret, Sr., having been authorized by the Council, purchased from Mrs. Dr. Eves, six acres of ground, situated one mile east of Morgan City on the line of the railroad for a cemetery; of this tract the lowest portion was sold to Father Chopin for the Catholic Church. The land was then a forest, but was rapidly cleared and laid out by Mayor St. Clair. The dead were carried to the cemetery on the cars, and night and day the rumble of the funeral train could be heard. But, alas, there were no funerals; only a few, a very few to place a body in a grave, already prepared, and cover it with lime.

No minister or priest was there, except the Rev. C. M. Atkinson, a Presbyterian minister, a glorious example of what the Christian faith and work should be, through all that time of sickness, sorrow, and death; he was ever among the people, never asking their creed, but always giving comfort and assistance, though he lost an only son and a daughter. Neither the Catholic priest nor the Methodist minister was here, and the Jewish Rabbi, Mr. Lowenstein, and his wife were dead.



Dr. Atkinson filled so far as human endurance could go the place of each to the sick and dying. No wonder the love for this grand man and for Dr. W. H. Gray, who was ever a worker by his side, sank deep into the hearts of those who survived. The record of that awful time stands 600 cases, 109 deaths; that of the year following at 50 cases and eight deaths. A committee had charge of all receipts and expenditures of money, of which Mr. Mansell, bookkeeper of the Morgan Line, was secretary and treasurer. Another committee had charge of all receipts and distributions of goods and clothing of which Mr. Wm. Trask was chairman. When all was over a full and detailed account was made by these gentlemen, which was published in pamphlet form by Prof. A. B. Hoskyns, entitled "The Yellow Fever in Morgan City". The Red Cross Society of New Orleans assisted with money and nurses. Mr. Thos. Shaffer, of Franklin, La., was active in securing aid for this suffering community.

During the 1870s there was a Brashear Academy conducted by Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Hoskyns; and a select school for girls taught by Mrs. Rentrope on Railroad Avenue. Mrs. M. E. Berwick was principal of a Catholic Parochial school, and the two public school teachers were Tucker and Heard. Miss Amelia Griffith taught private school, and a Madam Levy taught sewing and embroidery. Miss Tillie Grant taught school in Berwick across the bay.

In 1878 a very large and beautiful hall was built by Mr. Gus Drews on the northeast corner of Everett and First Streets. It was named "Whitney Hall," in honor of Charles A. Whitney of the Morgan Line. In this hall were held political meetings, lectures, balls, entertainments of all kinds, wedding receptions and roller skating. The lower story was occupied on the south by Edgar Bass, for a grocery store; the north by Mr. J. R. Jolley as a printing office. Whitney Fire Co. No. 1 had rooms in the building. On July 3, 1901, a great explosion took place in the grocery store and instantly the hall was in flames. The fire spread so rapidly that nothing was saved. The Review printing press and all files of that paper were lost. The fire consumed on the north a cottage of Mr. Wm. Costello, the Jewish Synagogue and the Costello Hotel, owned by Mr. Wm. J. Costello, and on the east the cottages of Mr. J. Tellotte and G. Serville.

In the year 1893 Mr. Gus Drews and associates establish-



ed the first bank and called it "The Bank of Morgan City." Later it was removed to the northeast corner of Front and Freret Streets and later still to the great building built by Wm. Drews, Sr., on the site of the Whitney Hall.

On February 24, 1881, snow fell in Morgan City to the depth of six inches. A photograph taken at the time of Second Street between Everett and North Railroad Avenue shows a curious picture of a southern town, its citizens plodding through the snow. Again in 1895 and 1898 snow fell to the depth of four inches, with cold so severe that orange orchards were ruined, and acres of floating ice came down the bay, and, lodging against the railroad bridge, covered the bay from shore to shore.

Father Thomas Smith on August 15, 1885, changed the name of the Catholic Church at Morgan City to Sacred Heart of Jesus. Father Smith had taken charge in October, 1883. In 1888 the church was pushed off its wooden blocks by a storm, but was immediately replaced and consolidated with hog-chains. From that time on it was never very safe or strong.

Rev. Andrew Souby became pastor of Sacred Heart Church of Morgan City on June 24, 1898. He found the church in poverty and unfit for divine worship. "The white-washed walls, bareboard confessional, a scantily furnished altar, the poorest kind of statues, and bulging walls of the church were held together by hog-chains," a church history records.

A group of energetic young women made a house to house campaign in 1899 to collect money for the church. This group continued their work for four years, holding all types of benefits to raise funds. When the \$6000 goal was reached, most of the congregation pitched in to build the church. Ground was broken June 6, 1902, the first spade of earth being dug by Daniel Lynch. (The church was finally completed and dedicated September 24, 1924.)

The Morgan City Orchestra was founded by Prof. C. S. Gray about 1890. The Music Hall, their new home, was built in 1895. Mr. Gray was a pupil of the New England Conservatory of Music, of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1879-80 which at that time was under the direction of Theodore Thomas, C. H. Bactus, S. Jacobsohn, and other musicians of national reputation. The aim of the M. C. O. was to furnish the public with



high grade compositions and to cultivate an appreciation of that class of music that appeals to the intellect. Old ballads, folk songs, operatic selections, symphonies and sacred music were rendered in a creditable manner. The orchestra was purely a social organization. Members were C. S. Gray, leader; Sidney Mayer, Wm. Drews, Jr., Dr. C. H. Douglas, A. A. Ozenne, H. M. Young, P. S. Winchester, H. Burkenode, Leon Lehmann, P. B. Ghirardi, Chas. Lynch, H. M. Mayo, E. Blumenthal, Marie Gray, Gessina Drews, Viola Davis, Lucie Decours, Sol Loeb, and Frank Joret.

Two of the noted lady singers of the olden time,, "song-birds" as they were called, were Mrs. Natili and Miss Lydia Lawrence, the former in opera and the latter in ballads, and there were others, male and female, to whom it was a joy to listen, historian St. Clair wrote.

"Many of the oldest citizens recall the merry gatherings they attended, when Harry Erp with his violin furnished the music. They may also remember the shouting "Now Arry give us something lively!" "Wake, rosin your bow, 'Arry," etc., etc. But merry making was not always the lot of the people of Morgan City; they endured fires, floods, fevers and cyclones; but they suffered and were strong, and each time faced the battle of life with renewed energy and courage, and well they realized that location and natural advantages alone do not make great and prosperous cities. That must be accomplished by a united people working together for a common object."

Life was very social during the "Gay Nineties." One of the greatest delights was an excursion by train, either to New Orleans or Lafayette. The railroad would send special cars to Morgan City which would be filled with young and old, gay with the holiday spirit. Cars would be attached to the regular train bound for the predetermined place. After a day or two the weary but happy group returned to their point of departure.

Travel for pleasure was not limited to the railroad. Numerous boat trips were available. Cargo boats which were responsible for carrying much of the supplies brought to the town also carried passengers. The Pharr steamboat line afforded regular transportation to passengers as far east as Vermilion. The packet for New Iberia left on Tuesday and



returned on Thursday. Transportation by boat to points east was also available.

In spite of the fact that roads were far from being desirable, in dry weather passage was fair. Rains, so common to this area, resulted in many a horse and buggy being stuck in the mud and caused enormous holes to appear in the roads — some which had to be filled by placing whole trees in them. Courtship by buggy could be quite trying.

Bicycling was also a favorite pastime. A special bicycle trail through Lawrence Park was popular, although at times it was almost unusable. On occasions a campaign was waged by the citizens to have the bicycle road fixed. Although the weeds were periodically cut in the park, apparently little attention was paid to the bicycle road by the town council.

Interest in state and national politics were fervent from the end of the Civil War but particularly in the last two decades of the 1800s and early 1900s, judging by articles in the local newspapers.

In '95 Morgan City was given credit as "being first to start the ball rolling" with a White Republican Club. Fifty-eight gentlemen signed their names as members of the White Republic Club of the Sixth Ward formed August 19, 1895, and called to order by J. R. Jolley. Capt. John B. Sanders was elected temporary chairman and E. A. Landry the secretary. Their cause was "Protection to All American Industries . . . Providence helps those who help themselves and we want our lumber, rice, and sugar protected . . . The Democrats are opposed to Louisiana's prosperity . . ."

Jared Young Sanders, born on Avoca Island, reared on Inglewood plantation which is on Tiger Island just a couple of miles outside the present city limits of Morgan City, opened his campaign September 17, 1903, for lieutenant-governor of Louisiana with a huge rally in Morgan City. All business ceased, schools were closed and children took part in the parade. Senator Murphy Foster was one of those who spoke in Sanders' behalf. Sanders was elected as was Blanchard, the gubernatorial candidate, and they were inaugurated May 16, 1904.

Again in Morgan City on June 27, 1907, Sanders opened his campaign—this time for governor of Louisiana. There was



a gigantic barbecue (2500 pounds of barbecued meat, 300 pounds of ham, 300 loaves of bread, coffee and pickles). There were 50 bolts of bunting, 25 bolts of U. S. flagging and 50 framed pictures of Sanders. (His opponent was Henry N. Pharr of St. Mary Parish, son of J. N. Pharr who had been Murphy J. Foster's opponent in the gubernatorial contest of 1896 when Foster was re-elected.) Sanders was elected.

The economic development of a community is usually reflected in records of bank assets. Before 1893 most of the financial business of this area was transacted in New Orleans. In that year the Bank of Morgan City was opened here with Gus Drews as president. E. E. Roby, who came from Kansas, City, was the first cashier. Officers in the early 1900s were Gus Drews, president; E. William Drews, Jr., cashier; and F. D. Winchester, assistant cashier. The Bank of Morgan City had a capital of \$25,000.00.

With T. L. Morse as president, the First National Bank began operations in 1903. The bank was organized by M. E. Norman and its capital stock was listed as \$25,000.00.

In 1905 the first bank was established in Berwick. Its president was John A. Pharr, and its capital stock was \$15,000.00.

An interesting note appeared in the local paper on November 2, 1907. "The banks of Morgan City and Berwick will issue only \$15.00 to any depositor in one day and the 60 day rule on withdrawals of certificates of deposits has been adopted. This is done on account of the stringency in the money market and advice of the clearing houses."

In 1913, The People's State and Savings Bank was opened with capital stock of \$40,000.00. The first cashier was Charles A. Bibbins and A. R. Fleury was assistant cashier. Both of the aforementioned Morgan City banks continued in operation until the banking holiday of 1933. Then the Citizens National Bank of Morgan City was formed in 1934 with its personnel drawn from the staffs of the two defunct banks.

In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century progress in education was made in Morgan City. In 1893, Reverend Thomas Smith and group of Catholic women were responsible for the erection of a Convent which was placed in charge of the Sisters of Marianites of Holy Cross. A



committee composed of Mesdames John Dalton, Thomas Shannon, and Daniel Lynch went to New Orleans to arrange for the Marianites to take charge of the proposed school. The ladies returned home and began work, along with other interested persons, to collect funds and make definite plans for the school.

On July 23, 1893, Sacred Heart Academy was blessed. In the new building the girls were taught, and the boys were instructed in the old building at the extreme corner of the Catholic Church lot. The faculty comprised five sisters, and students in school numbered less than 50.

It was reported by P. M. Lee, teacher of the colored school, that about 40 students were enrolled in his school in 1876. The school was first known as the Morgan City Academy, but it was later changed to Morgan City Colored Public School.

R. E. Reynaud, principal of the school from 1904-1906, said that the parish School Board supplied the school for five months of the year, and a board of colored men put up the money to supplement the teachers and run the balance of the year.

The building burned a few years after Reynaud left. The pupils were then taught for several years by a Mr. Tucker in a church building. Colored people later came together and raised money for a lot for the new school building.

The school board divided the parish of St. Mary into districts according to wards. On September 14, 1900, a resolution was adopted naming the school in Morgan City the Morgan City Grammar School and specifying that it should have seven grades, a principal with a salary of \$75 a month, and two assistant teachers making \$40 and \$35 respectively.

The school was over-crowded in 1908 so the upper grades were taught on the second floor of the City Hall. At that time the new school at the corner of Federal and Brashear was underway.

In 1909 organized high school teaching began, and in January, 1910, classes were taught in the new school. The upper floor was used for the high school, which was formally approved by the 1910-1911 session. There were 11 who finish-



ed from Morgan City High School on May 18, 1911 as members of the first graduating class.

In 1922 a separate high school building was erected on the same square with the grammar school. The next year Morgan City was placed on the list of accredited high schools.

World War I changed the complexion of things in Morgan City during the years from 1916 to 1919. Many of its men were drafted or volunteered for military service although a large number were deferred to do vital work at home. Because of its excellent port facilities, the government awarded contracts for six 300' steam ships needed in the war effort. The Union Bridge and Construction built these vessels in the government shipyard on the Young family property located on Bayou Boeuf about where Mobil Oil's base is today.

The potential of airplanes in war was first realized in World War I. To facilitate the arrival and departure of planes in the area, the grounds near the water plant were cleared as a landing strip.

Morgan City's populace cooperated fully to aid in conserving food and other needed materials. Each day there was to be one wheatless meal and Tuesday was a wheatless day. Bread, biscuit, cracker or pastry of any type were foresworn. Saturday was meatless day on which no red meat, beef, pork, mutton, lamb, veal or preserved meats were to be eaten. Monday was heatless day in order that coal as fuel might be conserved.

Thrift meetings were well attended and held often. Morgan City led the state in the number of War Saving Securities Societies and Morgan City schools ranked first in the area in a war bond selling contest.

Shortages in materials were very evident. Several weeks in the east searching for a new ferry boat was completely unsuccessful, the newspaper reports. The HENRY S. JACOBS, which had been built in Berwick, and launched in 1903, was badly in need of repair. The JACOBS had to be renovated, since a new boat could not be secured.

Entertainment was not lacking in spite of the war. On June 3-5, 1918, the Opera House was featuring a new film,



Tarzan of the Apes, which had been made in a woodland area just outside Morgan City.

Morgan City had grown from a village of approximately 500 souls in 1865 to a town of 5429 population in 1920. It lost 38 residents between the census count of 1910 and 1920. St. Mary, which had reached its peak population, 39,368, in 1910, dropped back to 30,754 in 1920. Most of the loss was attributed to the fact that many men left the parish in World War I service and then settled elsewhere after the armistice.

From 1920 on it was a different story. Neither depression, flood, nor World War II affected the growth of Morgan City. Population increases locally have ranged from 10 percent to 40 percent in the last four decades.



## *Mayors Of Morgan City*

A list of governing authorities of this community must start with Robert B. Brashear, even though he never actually held the title of mayor. It is he who, acting for other members of his family, seems to have supervised the transformation of sugar cane fields into a semblance of a town here on the east bank of Berwick Bay in the early 1850s.

The firm of Robert B. Brashear & Co. offered lots free to settlers who had certain special skills, made other lots available at reasonable prices and designated some as public squares. By October 8, 1855, the "new settlement of Brashear" was officially designated a postoffice and Robert B. Brashear was appointed postmaster.

When the settlers here applied for a charter of incorporation from the State of Louisiana, they chose the name Brashear to honor the family which had "carved out a townsite from a portion of their plantation."

The charter was issued on March 8, 1860, but the first mayor apparently did not take office until May 11, 1860. On that date G. H. Mann swore to "support the constitution of the United States and the State of Louisiana and to faithfully and impartially discharge and perform duties incumbent (on him) as Mayor of the Town of Brashear, according to (his) abilities and understanding." One Zephor Landry, Justice of the Peace, gave the oath of office at the same time to councilmen P. Dalton, A. Ducouro, A. Heymann, L. Maillot and N. Chesnut.

The meeting went immediately into session. Landry was duly elected secretary and assessor, James M. Proctor, town constable and tax collector and A. Ducouro, treasurer. It was decided that there should be two standing committees—streets and levees, and finance. Regular meeting dates were set as the first Saturday of each month at 7 p.m.

The town budget set by Mayor Mann was \$500, the money to be raised by taxes on real estate and slaves within the corporation. Coffee houses were taxed \$35 a year; dry goods and grocery establishments, \$15; billiard tables, \$25, drug store, \$5; flat boats selling merchandise and provisions, \$15; meat stall, \$5; circus or other public exhibition, \$7; ice house, \$15; public dray or wagon, \$5; hotels, \$15; sawmill or



lumber yard, \$15; and all vessels lying at the levee, 50c per day, all steamboats, \$1 per day.

Under Mann's administration a temporary lockup or jail was built (Lucien Maillot receiving the contract with a bid of \$180), Acts of Donation from the Brashears donating to the corporation lots numbered 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11 in Block No. 3 for public purposes were accepted, the square was fenced, and committees were appointed to procure a plan for a building to be used as Town Hall and School House and to confer with Mrs. Nancy Brashear relative to procuring suitable ground for a cemetery. Among ordinances passed were those requiring all slaves found after dark without papers from their master or employer to be confined in jail and not to be released until the master or employer paid \$2.50 in addition to \$1.50 per day for board; making it the duty of the constable to confine within the jail all strangers found at night "lying in the streets". or in open air, in barns or uninhabited buildings within the corporation who could not give a "good account" of themselves.

J. A. Gotcher was Brashear's second mayor. He took office on May 4, 1861 and took the following oath of office before Justice of the Peace Henry Watkins: "Being a citizen of this state I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all duties incumbent on me as Mayor of the Town of Brashear, according to the best of my abilities and understanding, agreeably to the CONSTITUTION AND LAWS OF THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA, so help me God."

The Civil War had begun. Brashear, according to its Mayor's oath of allegiance, had cast its lot with the states seceding from the Union.

Even before Gotcher took office there is evidence to be found in the account of the April 23 meeting of the Brashear council that all was not calm and peaceful in the town. Mayor Mann appointed on that date a patrol of men to act as night watch, with Charles P. Simmons as captain.

One of the first acts of Mayor Gotcher and his council was to make the patrol consist of eight men to be divided into two squads to serve from 9 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. and from 12:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. The official body also resolved that all Negroes belonging outside of the limits of the corporation



after 10 o'clock on Sundays shall be placed in jail and a fine of \$5 be collected from the owners of said Negroes.

Among business matters acted on during Gotcher's administration were petitions from the butchers relative to hides and to the railroad company asking that crossings be kept clear, and a resolution to grant the School Directors of the Second School District \$300 toward erection of a public school house on the town square provided that the directors first raise by subscription or otherwise an equal sum to be applied to the same purpose.

On Jan. 6, 1862, James H. Lyon was duly elected mayor. He and his council received a report on Jan. 11 that the assessment roll showed property in Brashear in the amount of \$1186.00 subject to taxation.

At the February 12 meeting it was resolved that a bridge be built on Second Street near Barrow Street, and that the two bridges on Front Street be repaired and that Orleans Avenue be ditched and graded.

A new ordinance was passed during Lyon's term of office. It provided that "any person opening the gates of the public square to let in cattle to pass through the square be fined \$4 for every such trespass and all cattle drivers herding their cattle within the corporation limits beyond 12 hours be fined \$50 for every such offense."

Minutes of the Mayor and Council of Morgan City are missing from September 6, 1862 to September 19, 1865. The minute book must have been carefully put away for the duration of the Civil War, because there is a skip of only a page between the record of the Sept. 18, 1865 meeting and the 1860, 1861 and 1862 meeting accounts.

The Sept. 19, 1865 meeting, presided over by J. P. Walters as mayor, apparently took up right where the former council left off because one of the first motions dealt with the old ordinance passed during Lyon's administration in regard to cattle within the limits of the town. Walters and his council resolved that such ordinance be adhered to as law and the town constable, Mr. LeBeau, "be particular in giving his attention that the bridge planks of the town be not carried off and torn up. . . ." This administration also ruled that all steamboats not running strictly in connection with the railroad had to pay a tax of \$1 per trip. Butchers had to pay



a tax of \$10 and do their butchering in public or forfeit their licenses.

Theodore Blanchard became mayor on July 7, 1866. It is noted that in minutes of meetings conducted by Blanchard the phrase "streets and landings" is used to describe a committee. It may be presumed that the "streets and levees" committee referred to in previous minutes was meant to be "streets and landings" as provided by the charter under which the Town of Brashear was incorporated. Today—96 years later—the term "streets and landings" is still used to define one of the important city council committees. It was also in 1866 that the first mention of the "nuisance" ordinance was made. That ordinance—Number 10—still stands.

It was Blanchard's administration which declared that places selling liquors not to be drunk on the premises would pay the same license as saloons. Every keeper of gambling instruments had to pay a fee of \$15. An ordinance was passed fixing the hours of the town markets as "from dawn until 12 (noon)."

Twenty-seven men voted in the election at the end of 1866 to choose office holders for the following year. In January, 1867, Samuel F. Marks took over the office of mayor.

The Marks administration prepared rules and regulations to guide the mayor and councilmen in official sessions. Among other things in the way of proper procedure adopted was a rule that "... every member wishing to speak or explain any matter before the board must rise to his feet and address the chairman. He must confine his remarks to the subject matter before the board and must use none but courteous and respectful language. No member of the council will be allowed to speak more than twice on the same subject at any one meeting, nor shall he be permitted to use more than 20 minutes each time unless by unanimous consent of the board."

An ordinance was passed to vacate parts of First and Second Streets for a national cemetery. (For some reason the plans were never carried out.) Another ordinance, adopted at this time, was to encourage the building of wharves or piers in the town on the margin of Berwick Bay.

Alexandria Cardillac became mayor in April 1869. Perhaps the most outstanding action taken during his term of office was granting Charles Morgan, who in 1868 had purchased the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Railroad,



the right to construct double tracks and to erect 650 feet of wharf.

In January 1870 Dewitt C. Roberts was elected mayor. At the February meeting of his council a discussion was held which led them to resolve that "in view of the present advantages to the town growing out of the improvements under process of construction by Morgan's Louisiana and Texas Railroad and the anticipated income in the number of ships and increase of population thereby into the town and making the opening of new establishments both in the merchandise and pleasure line which will bring in our midst capitolists (sic) investing in trade and a surplus of permanent residents increasing the amount of our yearly taxes by new improvements in buildings for residents . . . every inducement should be offered to those desiring of becoming permanent residents . . . " An old ordinance was, therefore, rescinded and a new one adopted fixing the rates of licenses "to afford a reduction in the cost of taxes and thereby invite the purchase of lots and erection of buildings thereon . . . "

The Roberts administration also made it a law that the business houses within the limits of the corporation "shall be closed up at twelve o'clock at night and keep closed until 4 o'clock a.m."

In the last set of minutes on record pertaining to Roberts' administration a resolution was adopted, to-wit: "Whereas the small pox is raging in the Town of Brashear and whereas the physicians in the town have refused to attend small pox cases in said town it is necessary to procure the services of a competent physician to attend all small pox cases in said town and to vaccinate all persons who have not been vaccinated . . . " The mayor was instructed to secure the services of such a physician at a salary of not more than \$10 a day.

No records of minutes are available for the months W. B. Merchant served as mayor. He was secretary under Roberts and then mayor until April 27, 1871. Merchant was also city attorney for a time, editor of the BRASHEAR NEWS, a real estate broker, and member of the State Board of Engineers.

The charter of the Town of Brashear was revised under date of April 27, 1871. It was signed by H. C. Warmoth, Governor of the State of Louisiana, who appointed Charles Miller, Newsdealer, as mayor of the town. However, Mr. Miller declined the honor.



On May 13, 1871, Charles Smith accepted the office of mayor. Ordinances passed in that year made it unlawful for any person to drive or chase wild, frightened, or dangerous cattle through the streets. A first offense was punishable by a fine of \$10; a second, \$20. Markets were ordered to keep stalls or apartments of livestock thoroughly clean. The BRASHEAR NEWS was designated as the official journal of the town and Mayor Smith was authorized to make the necessary terms with the Brashear Printing Company to that effect so that the proceedings of the Town Council would be published in the newspaper.

In December 1872, Smith tendered his resignation as mayor and was succeeded by Thomas W. Nelson who was apparently commissioned by Governor Warmoth to assume that office. During the four months he served, a request was received from H. E. Lawrence for a re-survey of two of the principal streets running each way across the Town of Brashear and fixing permanent corners. He offered to pay \$50 toward the \$200 fee set by Mr. A. S. Lawes to do the job. (Mr. Lawes, it was pointed out, was with the Mr. Barnes who made the original survey in 1857.)

The mayor's salary was fixed at \$600 per year and then in a month changed to \$200 per annum.

Charles Miller, president of the Brashear Fire Company No. 1, wrote on Feb. 24, 1873, that the newly formed company, with 28 members, one side lever hand engine with 50 feet of small hose and 18 feet suction hose, wanted an engine house and grounds to house their engine and hold meetings. Officers of the company, in addition to Mr. Miller, were P. Lahitte, treasurer, Edgar Bass, secretary, Charles Petit, foreman, Daniel Lynch, first assistant and W. Martin, second assistant.

Bids of \$5058 by William Drews and Frank L. Squires, \$5200 by T. J. Verret, and \$4150 by J. P. Tellote were received on the proposed erection of a "jail justice court and city hall". The bid of Mr. Tellotte was referred to a special committee of the council with powers to act. In April the council appropriated \$4000 out of town funds for the purpose of building the jail, court house and town hall.

On April 26, 1873 W. R. White's name appears as mayor of the town of Brashear in the records of a meeting on that date. During White's administration, these ordinances were passed: to regulate the observance of Sunday and the closing



up of places of business on that day; to require that marriages, births, and deaths had to be recorded by the secretary of the town; to impose a fine of \$10 on each and every physician, surgeon, or midwife of the town who failed to report to the secretary a birth or death in their presence; to authorize Mayor White to contract to build an edifice suitable as a hospital for small pox cases; to order that no horse could roam the streets of town without pain of penalty to owner (\$1 first offense, \$2 second).

In the 100-year history of the community, one Negro served as mayor, and contrary to popular belief, he was not elected, but appointed by Governor William Pitt Kellogg.

The mayor, Joshua Thomas, served from April 3, 1874, through January 11, 1875.

The following excerpts from the official proceedings of the mayor and council tell the story.

April 4, 1874 . . . "Whereas, owing to the dissensions between the councilmen and the former mayor of the town of Brashear, the property owners have refused to pay taxes for the last two years, though the taxes for the said years are due in full to said town, and

Whereas, his Excellency William Pitt Kellogg, governor of Louisiana, has appointed Joshua Thomas, mayor, of the Town of Brashear, thus bringing all branches of our town government together in one accord, therefore,

Be it resolved, by the mayor and councilmen of the Town of Brashear that we recognize in the appointment of Joshua Thomas the only means that could have brought harmony and concert of action in the deliberation of our new council, and, as such, we desire and do hereby express to his Excellency the governor, our thanks as representatives of this community.

"Be it further resolved, by the mayor and councilmen of the Town of Brashear, that the marshal proceed at once to the collection of taxes and licenses and that he be and is hereby directed strictly to enforce all laws or ordinances bearing on the same subject."

The same resolution gave the marshal exactly 10 days to collect the taxes and licenses or "if the marshal fails or refuses to so do" a new marshal was to be appointed.

The interim between the time Thomas took office and when he offered his resignation was apparently one of little



official action, as the minutes reveal nothing more than routine business.

At a meeting of the council on September 17, 1874, a letter was read in which Mayor Thomas had the following to say:

"Holding my commission from W. P. Kellogg, the deposed governor of Louisiana, and feeling under existing circumstances that it would be embarrassing to myself and the people of the town, if I should longer continue to exercise the duties of the mayor, under the present defacto state government, I would respectfully ask your honorable body to appoint a mayor pro-tem to act as such until the present political troubles have ended."

The council then appointed Councilman Rene Macready mayor pro-tem. However, Thomas continued to preside and to sign the minutes.

The following notice of election appeared in the BRASHEAR NEWS on Jan. 2, 1875:

"Whereas section two of an act entitled an act to incorporate the town of Brashear in the Parish of St. Mary, etc., approved April 27th 1871 provides that on the first Monday in January, 1875, the Mayor and two councilmen shall hold an election for a Mayor and five Councilmen for said town, therefore, I, Joshua Thomas, Mayor of the Town of Brashear, do issue this my proclamation giving notice to all qualified voters residing within the limits of the corporation of the town of Brashear as described in section one of an act to incorporate the town of Brashear approved April 27th 1871, that on Monday January 4th 1875 between the hours of 6 o'clock A.M., and 6 o'clock P.M., there will be held at the new town hall in town of Brashear an election for a Mayor and five councilmen for the town of Brashear, and I do further give notice to all qualified voters of said town that I have duly appointed Councilmen W. Jones and M. Goldstein to act in conjunction with me the said Mayor in holding said election in conformity with said section and act.

"The qualifications for voters shall be the same as those prescribed by the constitution of Louisiana for the electors of Representatives of the General Assembly.

"Given under my hand officially this 10th day of December 1874.

(Signed) Joshua Thomas, Mayor."



The BRASHEAR NEWS published the following article shortly thereafter. "Chas. H. St. Clair who heads the (Note: People's) ticket for Mayor is one of those energetic northern gentlemen who has cast his lot and invested his money with us since the war. He was in the Federal army and had the distinguished honor of holding a commission from ex-President Lincoln as captain. He served with distinction and honor. He came to Brashear, purchased a square of ground and erected one of the best steam laundries in the state, (on the corner of Greenwood and Second Streets). He was making money rapidly up to within about two weeks ago when his buildings were (sic) consumed by fire. Fortunately, his property is insured and he will be able to rebuild and resume business in a very short time. Mr. St. Clair is a man of energy and is competent in every respect to fulfill the duties of Mayor, and as sure as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west he will be the mayor of the Town on next Tuesday morning." Apparently, the NEWS knew because C. H. St. Clair became the next mayor in Jan. 1875.

The NEWS had this to say about the election: "The election passed off quietly and the people's ticket was selected. We now enjoin upon the new mayor and councilmen the importance of going to work at once upon the streets and sidewalks, let the taxes and licenses be collected and the money used in building up our town. We think that the Mayor and council will show the people of Brashear that they are willing and able to represent all of the different interests without acrimony and in less than six months all the principal streets and thoroughfares will be put in a condition to be the pride of all. This matter cannot be overlooked and we say again to the newly elected officers that the people will expect at your hands prompt action on the streets and sidewalks."

And a few weeks later the NEWS reports: "The committee on streets and landings have gone to work on our streets. We learn that the new administration is determined to spend the people's money to the best advantage."

Mayor St. Clair was against hogs running loose. He wrote: "I hereby give notice that, on and after Wednesday, February 9, 1875, the Ordinance relating to the running at large of hogs within the corporate limits of this town will be strictly enforced. It is my earnest wish that all citizens will



give their attention and I am sure there are none who will not admit the necessity of said ordinance being enforced."

"Coming into office with a depleted treasury to replenish, the present Mayor and Councilmen earnestly applied themselves to the remedial work of restoring the disordered financial condition of affairs, then existing, to its present sound and healthy action. With nothing but the disordered fragments of mal-administration to build upon, they have manfully encountered factious opposition, and infused into the public mind a confidence and security which has placed the credit of the town upon so firm a basis, as to insure a prosperity in the future, hitherto unknown . . . Surely this is extracting order from chaos." From this article, it may be seen that the BRASHEAR NEWS thought highly of Mayor St. Clair.

In the July 17, 1875 NEWS the following was printed: "His honor, The Mayor, made a happy couple on the night of the 13th instant it being, we believe, the first occasion on which he has officiated matrimonially since his induction into office."

From the following NEWS article, it can be seen that all was not sugar and spice between Mayor St. Clair and the BRASHEAR NEWS: "Mayor St. Clair told us unless his name was left out of the paper there would be trouble, and this time his statement was reliable because anyone who reads the following note which came to us through the post office will bear us out that the Mayor is troubled, yea, mad. We are inclined to like it, because he has actually paid his subscription to our polite agent. Here is the note:

Brashear Sept. 13th 1875

Sir,

You will please stop the three copies of the BRASHEAR NEWS for which I have subscribed from this date—make out my bill and leave it with Chas. Miller, and I will pay same at once.

C. H. St. Clair

"It is useless for us to say that we made out the bill at once and handed it to Mr. Miller who in turn received from his Honor the crisp greenbacks which was entirely satisfactory to all parties concerned. Who Next?"



It was during St. Clair's administration that the legislature changed the name of the town from Brashear to Morgan City. The act's date is February 8, 1876. It was petitioned for by numerous citizens who desired to compliment Charles Morgan, the railroad and steamship king of the South.

In 1876 the Lawrence family generously gave the city the square which became a playground and is known as Lawrence Park. The Lawrences also gave the land where the Court House was later built in 1905.

Mayor St. Clair appointed a committee (among whom were former mayors T. W. Nelson and Joshua Thomas) to prepare for the centennial celebration of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1876. The following program took place: "... a platform and seats were placed on Lawrence Park, committees of leading citizens of both races were appointed to seat ladies on arrival, associations were invited to attend a firing of salutes and ringing of bells was ordered. A salute of thirteen guns at sunrise and another at noon was accompanied by ringing of bells. On the platform Mayor St. Clair presided. Leading citizens took seats by invitation to hear the opening address, reading of Declaration of Independence, reading of the town's history, speeches, and patriotic music by the Eureka Silver Cornet Band (organized in 1876), concluding with a grand display of fireworks in the evening. About 500 were present, and both races represented on the platform. No case of disorder was reported and the occasion gave universal satisfaction."

On December 30, 1876, Mayor St. Clair and the councilmen met at town hall "to consider an appropriation for the year 1877." The total amount decided upon was \$5,330.00 from which the mayor received his salary of \$200.00 for the year.

During the yellow fever scourge in 1778 and 1779, Mayor St. Clair displayed notable courage and devotion in office. More than half of the citizens were stricken with the fever. Whole families were ill at a time.

The first railroad bridge across the Atchafalaya from Morgan City to Berwick was completed in 1881 while St. Clair was still mayor.

Born in Albion, New York, St. Clair first entered a medical college in New Orleans, but later became a pilot and captain



of river steamers. He entered the U. S. Navy at the beginning of the Civil War and served under Farragut and Porter at first, but was transferred to the transportation department of the Army under Butler, Canby, and Banks. He participated in the battles of Vicksburg, Grand Gulf, Port Hudson, Baton Rouge, Donaldsonville, and in the expedition up the Red River. He was on the WESTFIELD during her engagement with the famous Confederate ram, W. H. WEBB. Besides being Mayor of Morgan City, he served in the state legislature, on the City Council, and as clerk of the city council until his death. For many years he published articles, short stories, poems, poetic jingles and songs under the pen-name of Harry Southern or H. S. He was one of the small group that first began agitating in favor of a deeper channel from Morgan City to the Gulf. Morgan City Cemetery was planned and located by him, and many of the trees that adorn our streets today were planted under his direction and grew under his care.

E. B. Mentz became mayor on January 2, 1883, but resigned before half his term was completed. Mentz was born in the Town of Murray, Wells County, Indiana, the son of Dr. James Sutton Mentz. At an early age he enlisted in the war between the states and was mustered out with the rank of captain in the "beloved state of Louisiana", according to his family. He received his education in Louisiana, receiving his Bachelor of Law degree from Stright University of Law in New Orleans in 1879. He served as a sheriff and then judge of St. Mary. Judge Mentz met and married in Morgan City an English girl by the name of Amelia Margaret Griffith. They had three daughters. Miss Griffith was a school teacher here before her marriage.

In addition to serving Morgan City as mayor, Judge Mentz was collector of customs for the Port of Morgan City.

According to his family, Mentz signed the first Constitution of Louisiana after the Civil War. He held the office of Assistant-Secretary of the state of Louisiana under Governor Hays.

Dr. James H. P. Wise was the next official mayor of Morgan City, being installed Dec. 15, 1884. He completed Mentz' term, was elected Jan. 19, 1887 and re-elected Jan. 5, 1891. His service entailed more than 10 years.



Born in Ayrshire, N. H., Feb. 5, 1844, Wise received his early education there. His father, Sarony Wise, native of New Hampshire, was a lawyer. He belonged to a family who arrived in this country in 1640.

J. H. P. Wise lived with his parents until he was 16 when he ran away from home and enlisted in a Massachusetts regiment for the 90-day service. He was mustered out as a second lieutenant. At the close of the Civil War he was stationed at Fort Jackson, La., and while there he began the study of medicine. After completing the course in the Old Louisiana Medical college, he was detailed for service at the marine hospital where he remained three years. He then located in Glencoe, St. Mary, where he practiced until 1879, removing then to Morgan City where he passed the remainder of his life. During the yellow fever epidemic of 1879 he was one of the valiant men who worked night and day to combat the disease. His death occurred here in 1901.

Dr. Wise was an active participant in the fight against renewing the charter of the Louisiana State Lottery company.

In addition to service as mayor, he was collector of customs for Morgan City.

Joseph Matthew Dyer, who served as a councilman under Dr. Wise, succeeded him as mayor. Born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1866, he came to New Orleans a young man right out of school. There he met and married Alice Natili, only child of Baron Randolph Natili and his wife, Marie.

Dyer was primarily in the lumber business and owned and operated steamboats which were engaged in logging along the Atchafalaya and its tributaries. He and Meyer Lehmann operated a merchantile business under the name Dyer-Lehmann.

G. H. Douglas became mayor on Aug. 9, 1897.

On January 25, 1898, Thomas Shannon took over the mayoralty. Born of Irish immigrants in New Orleans, Shannon became an orphan early in his life. His mother died at New Orleans during one of the yellow fever epidemics, and his father was accidentally killed in Alabama a short time afterward while engaged in some work there. Shannon's educational advantages were very limited by reason of this



early bereavement of both parents. After the Federals entered New Orleans during the Civil War, the boy, being then only 12 years old, was employed as a cabin boy on the U. S. dispatch boat LEVITAN running between New Orleans and the mouth of the river. After three months this boat was taken by the Confederates, but was later recaptured by the Federals. Returning to New Orleans, the lad again found employment as cabin boy on a Federal boat, and sailed to Mobile, the boat being thereafter engaged in laying a cable from Cat Island to Ship Island, off Gulfport, Mississippi. After this task had been completed, Thomas secured a place as a cabin boy on the steamer GEN. N. P. BANKS, which carried Federal troops from New Orleans to Pensacola, Fla. Later, he was with Farragut's fleet at the capture of Fort Blakeslee, Ala. Following this event, he returned to New Orleans and shortly thereafter proceeded to Brownsville, Tex., where he became an employee of the U. S. commissary department for a time. Some time later, he made his way back to New Orleans and worked as storekeeper successively on the steamer MORGAN and the steamer JOSEPHINE. In 1867 it appears that he decided to break away from the river life, and coming to Morgan City he found employment in the general store of McCurdy and Moss. He remained in the employ of this firm about six years. In August, 1873, having by the exercise of thrift accumulated some capital and extended his acquaintances in business circles, the young man opened a general merchandise store here in Morgan City. This hardware and ship chandlery business is still in existence today. Mr. Shannon was a Roman Catholic and a regular democrat. He represented Morgan City on the St. Mary parish school board for 14 years. Mr. Shannon was appointed postmaster at Morgan City at the beginning of President Cleveland's first term and continued incumbent of that office throughout the Cleveland administration, serving seven years in that capacity.

Morgan City swung into the 20th century with Thomas Shannon at the reins. He was re-elected in 1902 as he was elected in 1898—without opposition. Under his administration, the old city hall (across the street from the post office) was erected in 1905 on land donated by the Lawrence family.

Mr. Shannon was appointed by Governor Sanders as chief oyster inspector for Louisiana for two years. It is stated



that Governor Sanders said that among all his appointees to office, Mr. Shannon was the most zealous in the performance of his duties.

Attorney Charles L. Wise, son of former Mayor James H. P. Wise and Mary Comerford Wise of New York City, became mayor on Jan. 7, 1907.

Born in Fort Jackson, Charles Wise was graduated in law from St. Ignatius college in Chicago. He began his law practice here in Morgan City about 1900.

During his four years there was progress in many areas of the town. A grammar school, presently part of M. D. Shannon Elementary, was built during his administration. A new railroad bridge was built in place of the one that had served for the previous twenty-six years. After his service as mayor, Wise was City Attorney of Morgan City for a period of 28 years. During his lengthy political career, he was a member of the State Legislature.

When Charles L. Wise defeated Thomas Shannon for mayor in 1907, he had only a slim two votes majority. The MORGAN CITY REVIEW later reported:

“Stress is laid on the fact that Mayor Wise was elected by only two votes. This is no reflection on the winner but a tribute to the calibre of candidates who offered for office in those days. The very closeness in count probably explains why office holders worked hard at their jobs to gain and retain the good will of the voters. Anyhow, the records of those years show progress in many things and compared to present day ease in financing, and especially current methods of organizing and trending community thought and action, those leaders of the 80's, 90's and 1900's had to rise early and burn their oil lamps well into the night. Between 1903 and 1915 a City Hall was built, the first fine public school building was erected, a handsome city market decorated the waterfront, streets were shelled, and tree planting program for beauty, comfort and fire protection was under way. Outstanding, perhaps, was the bringing together of shippers over a wide territory to consolidate, finance, and actually dredge a usable ship channel from Morgan City and Berwick to the Gulf.”

Maurice D. Shannon became mayor for the first time on Jan. 16, 1911. He was a son of the former mayor, Thomas



Shannon. M. D. Shannon was re-elected in 1915 and again in 1919. At the end of that term of office, he nominated his close personal friend, M. E. Norman, for mayor and headed his campaign, at the same time running for the council, being elected and named mayor pro-tem. Mr. Norman and Mr. Shannon were both re-elected in 1927.

Maurice E. Norman became mayor on January 17, 1923. Born in Patterson, he attended public as well as private schools there. For about three years, he was a student at the University of Louisiana. He left in 1892, was variously employed, and became cashier of the bank in Patterson in 1900. In 1903 he organized the First National Bank of Morgan City and was a cashier there and later president, and in 1924 was largely responsible for the consolidation of the First National and the Bank of Morgan City and Trust Co. He became manager of the Wadell-Williams Company, which subsequently was reorganized under the name of Norman-Breaux Lumber Company. At the time he was elected mayor he was the president of that company, which was then the largest tupelo gum producer in the United States. The election of 1923 was the first one in which Morgan City women could vote for mayor. The 19th amendment (for women suffrage) was passed in 1920. The MORGAN CITY REVIEW had this to say about the election: "The election Monday was passed off quietly. No friction was in evidence at any time, and no drunkenness or rowdyism were noted. It is believed that the occasional woman voter had its fine influence in the election, both as to procedure and behavior. The woman vote may or may not have had anything to do with the result of the election, but its effect was noticeably healthy." The TIMES PICAYUNE had this to say of Mr. Norman: "... the town is officered by M. E. Norman, recognized as one of the most proficient mayors of Louisiana." Mayor Norman was active in various civic enterprises. He assisted in raising funds for the construction of the Morgan City Masonic Temple, was the donor of the site of the Jewish Synagogue, and also donated a park to the city which is known as Norman Athletic Park. Mr. Norman died in office, and M. D. Shannon, Mayor pro-tem, was appointed to fill the unexpired term of office.

The early terms of Maurice D. Shannon were struggles to operate a town which had suffered the loss of the timber



and oyster industries and the Texas Company shook mill. Such things as flood, storms, and depressions occurred at intervals.

The 1940s saw Morgan City making a comeback as a promising port town. But as far as the mayor and council were concerned, there were greater problems than ever. In the 1930s they had coped with effects of business failures and unemployment, with New Deal solutions such as ERA and WPA, and with an almost overnight demand for additional housing and public facilities created by an influx of families from the east coast to take advantage of the new industry—deep-sea shrimping—developed off the Louisiana coast the last half of this decade.

The disrupting influences and the many tragedies of World War II made the 1940s an era of grave responsibility for Mayor Shannon and his council. The location here of a defense plant which built huge floating drydocks for the U. S. Navy absorbed all the available labor of the entire port area, stimulated business and growth to an abnormal degree and strained municipal facilities. Shannon and the city councilmen faced problem after problem of shortages in housing, revenue, services, etc.

In spite of the many drastic changes in the local scene throughout his administration, Mayor Shannon managed with his conservative ways to keep city affairs on an even keel.

Under the Shannon administration the municipal power plant was cleared of its original debt and then expanded; the sewer system was improved and extended; water and transmission lines were run to new sections of the community; the incinerator method of garbage and trash disposal was inaugurated; and new streets were opened.

There were many other improvements made under the Shannon administration but perhaps the ones which made the greatest impressions were the complete gas utility system added to municipally-owned utilities; a modern public library building and a city-financed year 'round recreational program with a full time director in charge.

Of all the accomplishments to his credit, none gave Shannon more satisfaction than the successful operations of the municipal light and power plant. It was not erected during a year he was mayor but it was first proposed and championed by him and he saw it built while he was mayor pro-tem



under Norman whose genius as a financier played a large part in making the plant a reality.

At the end of 1950 Mr. Shannon retired from public life but he never lost interest in the community he served faithfully for 40 years—32 as mayor and eight as mayor pro-tem. His death occurred here on Feb. 22, 1958.

In 1950 when Shannon did not seek re-election, there was a four-man race in which Dr. C. R. Brownell was elected mayor in the first primary.

Mayor Brownell, fourth generation of the Brownell family in Morgan City, was born in New Orleans on Dec. 29, 1913. He was nine years old when his parents moved here to reside. His great grandfather, Charles Richard Brownell, came to Louisiana from Michigan in 1866 and helped organize and manage one of the first sawmills at this port. He was later a partner in the Brownell-Drews sawmill here. His son, Charles Horace Brownell, continued in the lumber business and added banking to other extensive interests.

Mayor Brownell's father, C. R. Brownell, managed the family interests and organized a new business, an ice and cold storage plant, and also served St. Mary Parish as a representative in the Louisiana Legislature from 1936 until his death in 1947.

Young Brownell received his Doctor of Medicine degree from Tulane University and opened an office in Morgan City, but two years later went into the service. On his return from combat duty, he resumed his practice which he continues to this day.

Dr. Brownell entered politics in 1948 when he sought the seat in the House of Representatives held by his late father. In a 6-man race for the two seats, the doctor was elected in the first primary. Two years later he was elected mayor. Dr. Brownell completed his Legislative term but did not seek re-election.

When Dr. Brownell took office as mayor in 1951, he and his administration headed a community which was flourishing as the result of the discovery of oil in a Gulf of Mexico area readily accessible to this port. The population increased rapidly in a few years time and housing, church, and school accommodations could not keep pace. Expansion in all departments of city service was necessary.

Now in his third term as mayor, Brownell and the men who have served on his councils can look with satisfaction on



landmarks of progress at every hand. A \$160,000 swimming pool for whites, another \$100,000 fine pool for the Negro citizens, a handsome \$105,000 municipal court, police station and city jail building on Highway 90, a recreation center, a municipal baseball park, a sub-fire station and triple the amount of fire-fighting equipment, improvements which have made the Palourde park a popular picnic area and helped make the lake itself one of the top racing courses in the nation—all these and more have been accomplished.

In addition, three miles of streets have been paved and the contract was let recently for the paving of almost nine more miles within the corporate limits.

The capacity of the municipal light and power plant has been increased by 400 percent during the past nine years and an additional plant is now assured. It will have more than 10,000 KW capacity with power generated by steam as well as by diesel or gas. Capacity of the waterworks plant was 1½ million gallons per day in 1950, is now 4½ million gallons and plans are on the board to increase the output by another 3½ million gallons.

A number of important commissions have been created during the Brownell administration. Morgan City's Planning Commission has arrived at a format for orderly expansion in the future. The Drainage Commission has plans and powers which will solve problems to insure proper drainage of a city which built up so fast existing facilities could not always take off excess rain water. Last but far from least, the Morgan City Harbor and Terminal District was created in 1952 with the backing of the city administration which recognized the need for a body devoted to channel and port improvements.

The Morgan City Police Department was reorganized in recent years. The modern short wave radio communications system was installed to lend expediency to all branches of activity by city employees. Support of the Chamber of Commerce has been continuous and the hiring of a full time, experienced manager last year reflects the progress made in the operation of that organization.

When the present projects are completed, the Brownell administration since 1950 will have directed the spending of more than \$6 million in public improvements financed by tax and revenue bond issues and another \$2 million out of regular city income.



## *Port Of Morgan City*

Ask anyone who has ever been to Morgan City, or heard of it, what his first thought is in connection with this community and the answer will very likely be—BOATS!

To some, the name Morgan City immediately conjures up visions of seagoing shrimp trawlers; others think of cabin cruisers, inboards and outboards for pleasure fishing and hunting; or of heavy barge and towboat traffic moving east, west, north or south at this hub of Intercoastal Canal routes; of crew and cargo vessels serving inland marine and deep Gulf oilfields; of pirogues, skiffs, small motorboats, luggers bringing in catches of crabs, catfish, crayfish, and oysters; sail and diesel powered boats arriving with red snappers; houseboats, grocery boats, ferry boats, school bus-boats, mail boats, fire boats, and even 100-mile-an-hour racing hulls.

It's not surprising, therefore, that this port's very name is a memorial to a "big wheel" in marine transportation.

Brashear, as this community was known the first years of its official existence, was changed to Morgan City in 1876 in tribute to one Charles Morgan. He was a Yankee and, in the opinion of some, a "carpetbagger." He rarely, if ever, set foot on local soil and gave nothing to the town in the way of a park, public building or large donation. Indirectly, however, he was Brashear's great benefactor since the enterprises in which he engaged to earn a fortune for himself made this Atchafalaya River town a booming port for years and set the pattern for future growth and development.

Morgan was a magnate in the steamship-railroad business. He is credited with owning the first steamboat to navigate the Gulf of Mexico, an event said to have occurred in 1835. In his lifetime, it is said, he owned over one hundred vessels—more than any other single man in American history.

Morgan was born of poor parents, April 21, 1795, in Killingsworth, (now Clinton) Connecticut. He appears to have had little education and at the age of thirteen was already a working "man," clerking in a grocery store in New York City. He saved his money and within a few years opened a little shop for the sale of ship's stores and chandlery in Peck's Slip.



Soon afterward he began importing fruit and other goods on a considerable scale from the West Indies, Central America and southern ports. Before long he had acquired a few shares in brigs and schooners in that trade.

The COLUMBIA in 1835 is believed to have been the first steamboat to navigate the Gulf of Mexico. This and the NEW YORK, both owned by Morgan, were pioneers of the Morgan Line in the Gulf. The two vessels were making regular trips in 1838 between New Orleans, Louisiana, and Galveston, Texas.

In the years preceding the Civil War, Morgan's vessels enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the enormous cattle trade between Texas ports and New Orleans.

By 1854 Morgan had the ORIZABA, PROMETHEUS and DANIEL WEBSTER running to Vera Cruz via New Orleans under a mail contract that lasted for five years. In 1856 the firm of Harris & Morgan sold for \$340,000 to the Southern Steamship Co. of New Orleans the CHARLES MORGAN, LOUISIANA, MEXICO and PERSEVERANCE vessels that had been running to Texas and Mexican ports. This was the beginning of Charles Morgan's incorporated marine interests in the gulf.

In 1856-57 Cornelius Vanderbilt, a leader in shipping circles and one of the most aggressive and able business men of his day, offered Morgan some stiff competition. Vanderbilt launched two new vessels, OPELOUSAS and MAGNOLIA, sidewheelers with two decks and two masts, just under 1,000 tons each, and specially designed for the cotton trade of the Gulf. In November of 1856 the railroad had entered into an agreement with Vanderbilt for steamer service which was not inaugurated, however, until April 1, 1857, when the first sidewheeler GALVESTON was placed in service. On the twelfth of that month the final link of the NOO&GW railroad from Algiers to Brashear was completed. A new wharf was built at the line's terminus on Berwick Bay. Early in May a second steamer, OPELOUSAS, was added. It was arranged for a semi-weekly boat train to match ship schedules, in addition to a regular daily train from New Orleans. Connections were also available with New Iberia and other points on Bayou Teche by means of sternwheelers.

Subsequently Vanderbilt sold out his steamship lines to Charles Morgan.



During the Civil War many of Morgan's ships were impressed into the service on one side or the other and several were destroyed but he managed to recover sufficiently from the effects of war to have 15 "first class iron steamers" in service May 25, 1869—when he became the purchaser of the railroad and all its equipment, including the property and franchises west of Berwick Bay for a total of \$2,300,000. The combined rail and steamship route from New Orleans to Texas (via Brashear) was quicker than steamship alone and the NOO&GW thus became an important adjunct to the Morgan interests.

Morgan spent over \$2,000,000 to improve the road. He extended the Gulf-Western Texas and Pacific Railroad from Indianola to San Antonio, and the year before this, in 1868, he purchased controlling interest in the Houston and Central Texas Railroad to Denison, Texas, with branches at Waco and Austin, and connecting with his steamship lines near Houston. At the time of his death (1878) he was planning to extend his Louisiana line to the Sabine.

Charles Morgan was more than 70 years old when he undertook and succeeded in 1873-74 in dredging a deeper channel through the Atchafalaya Bay to accommodate his fleet of steamboats. It is said that he tried to interest the government and was even told by some Congressmen to go ahead and dig the channel and the government would reimburse him—but the government never did, as far as anyone knows.

The "ditch" Morgan dug was six miles long, 200 feet wide and 10 feet deep. A whole army of men carried on work for two years. When it was completed his iron sidewheel steamers, among the finest in America, could ply between Brashear and Galveston in from 12 to 14 feet of water where there had been two feet before. The cost of this prodigious dredging feat was said to have been a million dollars.

By the end of 1873, a Morgan fleet of seventeen vessels was in active operation here.

In 1875 Charles Morgan had the vessels, BRASHEAR and NEW YORK, built by Harlan & Hollingsworth Co. (These were later altered by raising their top sides and adding another deck. The former's name was changed to the LONE



STAR.) Two similar vessels — ALGIERS and MORGAN CITY—were constructed for Morgan by the same yard the next year.

It was mid-1875 when Captain John N. Pharr put a line of staunch steamboats into service plying between Brashear and New Iberia, carrying the United States mail, passengers, freight, etc. He also ran a packet from Morgan City to Bayou Vermilion, leaving every Monday and returning every Friday. In addition, there were lumber boats constantly plying through lakes and bayous bringing sawed and split lumber to Brashear. In one account of that year it is written that "since January 1 there have entered and cleared at this port 39 schooners, all of which have gone out heavily laden with live oak, lumber, sugar, molasses, etc."

The year before Charles Morgan had reduced the rates of travel over his steamship route to Galveston. The cost was \$12 from New Orleans to Galveston or \$21 for the round-trip, ticket good for thirty days. The fare of a round-trip from Centerville to New Iberia was \$3.50—"going up on Tuesday and returning on Thursday."

Many of Morgan's steamships were outfitted here in Morgan City. When the HUTCHINSON, the pioneer vessel of Morgan's line to New York, was finished being outfitted, salutes were fired and the whole town turned out in its honor. The first shipment by the HUTCHINSON from Brashear was made by Mr. O. Ditch. The large assorted cargo of the HUTCHINSON consisted of "a fine lot of sugar from Mexico, 223 bales of cotton, 141 bales of wool, 50 bales of hides, 110 bundles of hides, and 1500 loose hides."

The Brashear News of 1875 reported as many as eight steamships in port at one time during the dull season giving an employment of up to 800 men.

In those days, one could rent a steamer for \$300 a month, hire a captain and crew for \$230 a month and buy enough provisions for one month with \$50. A steamer at this price could carry 200 tons of coal and only draw 8½ feet of water.

The rates on freight were very irregular. The rate on a hogshead of sugar was \$2.00 and \$1.00 on a barrel of molasses. Cattle rates were based on their age. Calves cost 75c per head,



cows and grown beeves \$2.00 per head. Cotton was carried at the price of \$250 per bale.

Brashear was port of call for such steamships as the ARKANSAS, MATAGORDE, ALABAMA, I. C. HARRIS, HARLAN, WILLIAM G. HOWE, CLINTON, ST MARY'S, HUTCHINSON, WHITNEY, CITY OF NORFOLK, MORGAN, JOSEPHINE, and GUSSIE. These traveled to gulf ports and New York as well as Cuba and Mexico.

The Morgan fleet was then one of the important factors in the commerce of the gulf.

Charles Morgan died in 1878. Prior to his death he sold his rail and steamer property to a company incorporated as the Louisiana and Texas Railroad and Steamship Company.

The channel through Atchafalaya Bay was maintained through steady usage of the company's fleet until the 1880's.

The railroad bridge over Berwick Bay was completed in 1882 and the rapid extension of rail service westward resulted in competition the steamship line could not meet. Vessels of the fleet were gradually withdrawn and the channel allowed to silt up.

Morgan Citians went through a readjustment period. The jobs provided by the Morgan enterprises played out. Fortunately, the area had a prolific supply of seafoods, (oysters, crabs, turtle and fish) to furnish food for consumption and for trade. The fertile soil was made to produce cane, rice, and truck crops. The marshes were a source of revenue because of the fur-bearing animals which could be trapped and skinned for the market. But the biggest industry was the logging of timber and work in the sawmills.

From the 1880s on, however, there were those who did not lose sight of the fact that Morgan City's real mission in life was service to the state and nation as a seaport. They kept alive the memory of coastwise and foreign trade ships coming in and going out from this port and complete faith that the day would come when Berwick Bay once again would harbor such a fleet. They substantiated their belief by pointing to a published statement that Brashear loomed as a rival to New Orleans, according to a newspaper of the day in that great city.



One persistent champion of the cause of deepwater all the way from this port to the Gulf of Mexico has been the local newspaper.

Jame Richard Jolley who edited the Morgan City Review for 45 years was foremost in advocating the opening of Bayou Plaquemine and securing of deep water to the gulf. He was secretary of the Atchafalaya and Plaquemine Improvement Association which was formed in Morgan City in 1887 with the announced intention of securing a channel 30 feet deep from the mouth of the Atchafalaya River to the Gulf and opening Bayou Plaquemine to the Mississippi River with locks.

In 1906 during Mayor Thomas Shannon's administration, the Atchafalaya Bay Ship Channel Company was organized with a capital stock of \$250,000, domiciled at Morgan City. Directors of the company were F. B. Williams, E. A. Pharr, C. A. Bibbins, H. M. Cotten, C. R. Brownell, R. H. Dowman, H. B. Hewes, A. T. Gerrans, J. D. Shaffer, S. C. Tevis, Thos. Thorguson, R. E. Milling, C. Gutekunst, Ed. A. Hanson, Jas. Peterman, Jos. Birg, Walter Burke, E. P. Munson, Byrnes Young, E. S. Barnett, W. E. Mount, L. W. Gilbert, P. L. Reneaudet, I. S. Boudreaux, D. Caffery, Sr., E. W. Dreibholz, J. A. Thornton, Fred Wilbert, Dennis Burguierres, R. Lee Riggs, Thos. Shannon and L. Trainor.

An election was held that year and citizens of St. Mary voted a special tax to run for seven years to supplement funds raised by private subscription. The money, approximately \$150,000, provided a 14-foot depth in the Atchafalaya Bay Ship Channel. As a result, traffic increased so rapidly that in 1914 Congress voted to make the channel a government project. In 1914 the U. S. Government took over the Atchafalaya Bay Ship Company and started to dredge a channel 200' x 20'. A depth of 18 feet had been attained when a hurricane in 1915 almost eliminated the channel.

The REVIEW, under management of C. E. King since 1916, reports with regularity through the next 45 years the efforts sometimes successful, other times in vain, to get the government to expend money on the channel.

In the late 1930s, increased channel traffic resulted from the discovery of shrimp in large quantities off the coast of



Louisiana. Mayor Maurice D. Shannon and C. E. King made several trips to Washington to present appeals for improvements. Under the sponsorship of the City, King prepared briefs which were kept up-to-date in the hands of the U. S. Corps of Engineers in New Orleans and Washington, D. C., the Mississippi River Commission, Rivers and Harbors Congress, etc.

Encouragement was received when Congress declared the re-dredging of the channel to a minimum depth of 10 feet an emergency project and work was started in June, 1939, and completed the next year.

In 1947 representatives of the city, police jury and chamber of commerce organized the Atchafalaya River Ship Channel Association which elected P. R. Norman president, Clarence Kemper of Franklin, vice-president, J. H. Evans, secretary, and George D. Brown of Berwick, treasurer. Announced purpose of the organization was to provide, without cost to the United States, all lands, easements, and rights-of-way necessary to the construction of a land-locked channel.

A \$3,300,000 project to relocate the channel was officially approved by the US division engineer at Vicksburg but the route would cross Point au Fer and opposition in Terrebonne Parish prevented it from ever becoming a reality.

In 1952, Mayor C. R. Brownell was advised by the division engineer at New Orleans that "if you ever want to get anywhere, you should create an independent unit to be continuing in operation in this matter."

As the result of this advice, in 1952, the Morgan City Harbor and Terminal District was created with C. E. King as president, Fred Sewart, vice-president; Dave Kahn, secretary-treasurer, and J. D. Hamilton and A. J. Pattie, members.

Under the sponsorship of this legally constituted body, an advisory unit was formed with Victor Guarisco as chairman and M. E. Michael and Kenneth Joynt as members.

Both the port authority and the advisory group made surveys, tabulated tonnage information, and pushed channel and port improvements in sundry ways.

The port authority now has Pattie as its president; Charles Cloutier, vice-president; John Fangue, secretary-trea-



surer; and as members, Frank J. Domino, Francis T. Aucoin, Orrin E. Christy, George D. Brown, and Sylvester Verret.

The St. Mary parish police jury which has worked closely with local port efforts has as its waterways representatives Nathan Levy, Sr., of Franklin and Ned C. Russo, with jury president Joseph Cefalu as an enthusiastic member, ex-officio.

Karl Loeb is waterways committee chairman for the City of Morgan City and for the Morgan City-Berwick chamber of Commerce.

The channel now has a depth of 16 feet, and according to figures tabulated by Loeb, more than \$6 million worth of cargo was shipped from Morgan City during 1959 to foreign ports; more than \$2 million worth was imported; and 21 million tons of cargo moved past the city going in all directions of the compass.

As this history of 100-year old Morgan City goes to press, there is a unified effort behind a bill introduced into the Louisiana Legislature of 1960 by Representative E. J. Grizzaffi which would put the full faith and credit of the state behind bonds, up to \$20 million, which could be authorized by the Morgan City Harbor and Terminal District for port and channel improvements. Grizzaffi led the passage of HB127 successfully through both houses of the Legislature and now it comes before the people of the state as a constitutional amendment.



## *Morgan City--Center of Oil and Gas*

Louisiana first produced oil in 1901 but even before than St. Mary parish had the oil fever, according to a 1901 issue of the St. Mary Planter's Banner. In that year there were at least three oil companies organized within the parish. Of the three — Franklin Oil Co., Attakapas Oil Co., and Chittimacha Oil Co., the latter is the only one known to have put down a well in 1902 at or near Charenton Beach. They drilled all of 1672 feet before abandoning the well.

Local prospectors put down a well on Avoca Island in the fall of 1918 and another in the spring of 1919—without success.

Land and Exploration Co. of Houma conducted extensive seismic operations on Avoca and Glenwild plantations as early as 1928, having drilled a dry hole near Charenton in 1926. But development of the vast pools of oil beneath the land, marshes and waters of the parish into oil and gas fields seems to have begun in 1935 with the discovery of the Jeannette field. From then through 1958 there have been only 11 years in which a major field was not discovered inland in St. Mary. Since the discovery of Eugene Island Block 32 Field offshore in 1949, 12 additional offshore oil and gas fields have been found.

Beginning with Texaco, the list of companies which have in the space of only 25 years put St. Mary up in the top 10 producing parishes among Louisiana's 58 petroleum-bearing parishes includes Shell, Humble, Mobil, Gulf, Phillips, Sun, Kerr-McGee, Sinclair, Continental, Pure, Superior, California, Atlantic, United Gas, Union Producing, and many others.

St. Mary last year attained the following rank among Louisiana's 57 petroleum producing parishes: fourth in crude, fourth in mcf casinghead gas, sixth in mcf natural gas and 10th in condensate.

Little note was taken of oil exploration activity during the 1920's. One reference is found in a 1923 issue of the Morgan City Review to the damaging effect of a sudden, tornado-type wind on wildcat operations — the first, perhaps, of many accounts this newspaper was to publish about battles



in the war which drillers on marine locations have to wage against the weather. The article reads:

"A twister struck Belle Isle at 7:15 a.m. Tuesday morning demolishing three oil derricks belonging to the Union Sulphur Company, but occasioning no loss of life."

"According to Mr. Every of the Sulphur Co., the cyclone lifted the huge derricks entirely clear of the ground, twisting them to bits and distributing the debris over the several hundreds yards. The edge of the tornado struck a pull boat to which was attached one of the Company tugs, but beyond severely tossing the craft worked no damage."

"After destroying the third derrick, the twister turned south and swept off into the gulf."

During the 1930s there were healthy signs that St. Mary parish held a real promise for the petroleum industry. Seismographic work, begun in the late 1920s, increased in land, marsh and marine areas and by 1935 St. Mary's first field, at Jeanerette, had been discovered. Texaco's first producing well was State Horseshoe Bayou Well No. 1 brought in in August of 1937, followed by State Bateman Lake Well No. 1 on December 24, 1937. The same year Shell Oil Company made discovery of the Gibson field in neighboring Terrebonne parish. Sun Oil Company began its earliest seismic operations in this area during 1937 but it was three and a half years later that the company drilled its first location — Belle Isle Corp. Well No. 1, completed as gas condensate producer. Phillips Petroleum Company sent a seismic party here in '38 and drilled, without luck, at Glenwild in '39.

It was during the 1940s, however, that Morgan City claimed nation-wide attention by virtue of its location in relation to the Gulf of Mexico oilfields.

Magnolia Petroleum Company (now Mobil Oil Co.) went quietly about the business of investigating the possibilities of wresting petroleum from its deep hiding places in the Gulf floor. Exploration crews were working in the Eugene Island area during 1944 and by August of 1945 Mobil had its seismic results in hand and had submitted a bid on 27 tracts of offshore property, totaling 129,000 acres. Magnolia, the only concern to bid, was awarded the lease.



Between May and August of 1946 plans were completed, men assigned, and equipment rounded up for this first attempt at drilling in deep water out of sight of land. By August 10 a handful of roughnecks and drillers were making last minute preparations. On August 21 the well was spudded at Eugene Island Block 58, five miles off Point au Fer.

The men lived on a quarterboat tied up at Eugene Island and plied back and forth on the 10-mile trip to the rig mounted on a wooden platform. They had no pattern to follow for this type of drilling, they had to improvise even on the new procedures they had mapped so carefully. And then after drilling to a depth of 12,875' the well was abandoned — dry as the Sahara!

The noble experiment was a failure on the company's books but it was an historic well as far as the industry was concerned. Those who may have thought "it couldn't be done" now knew that men could venture forth a good distance from shore and survive the hardships involved while prying into the secrets of the gulf underground structures. It had been demonstrated that by trial and error (even of the type to rival science-fiction stories) men could solve the problems confronting operators in the deep.

Magnolia achieved fame and Morgan City gained the right to call itself the birthplace of offshore oil activity.

Even greater attention was focussed on Morgan City and the gulf scene when Kerr-McGee Oil Industries moved in on the heels of Magnolia to place its bets on bringing in an offshore well. This time the gamble paid off and Kermac had on Nov. 17, 1947, a producer in Ship Shoal field, Block 32.

The significance of Kerr-McGee's discovery was not immediately recognized by the general public. The major oil companies, however, were prompt to enter the picture. They risked a hundred million dollars on the enterprise and accepted all the hazards as calculated risks. The result was a "few fabulous years" for Louisiana, especially Morgan City. Located on the Atchafalaya River which empties into the direct center of the tidelands, this port is ideally situated to serve as a base for offshore operations.

While the glamour of offshore operations holds the spot-



light, drilling on land and water in St. Mary has made steady progress in the past 20 years.

Ohio Oil Company brought in its first well in the Duck Lake Field in 1950. It was soon to have 10 producers there. The Bayou Sale field in which Humble in 1956 had 25 producing wells had been discovered in 1941. The Deer Island field was discovered in 1942. Humble had also established the Bayou Carlin field in 1945. The Duck Lake field which so far is among the most prolific was discovered in 1948. Sun had 33 producers in its Belle Isle field by 1956.

Activity was reduced in 1951 because of the tidelands ownership dispute. While Congress argued the issue, the oil companies were being held up on permits to drill in off-shore waters.

Kermac had to discontinue offshore drilling out of Morgan City at the time and a large number of men were laid off work. All other companies were affected.

The situation was serious. A mass meeting of representatives of all of the coastal parishes of Louisiana was to be called by the city administration. They planned to discuss the issue and to form a formidable organization to seek legislation that would allow the companies to resume offshore drilling.

The situation was eased, however, when the companies were permitted to resume drilling, their lease money to be held in escrow until the ownership of the Gulf area in question was decided by the Supreme Court.

Permits issued to drill increased from a few in 1946 to 2,582 in 1950. But, Louisiana wildcatters had one of their worst years during 1950. Eight out of every nine wells that were drilled proved to be dry.

As of June 8, 1951, St. Mary Parish had 12 oil fields, 300 oil wells, 31 gas wells, and a production of 11,217,555 barrels of oil.

New holes more than doubled during the year 1954. Shell and Magnolia were leaders in this increased tempo. The greatest increase was shown by Shell. It had opened Eugene Island, Block 18 field off St. Mary Parish in June of 1954. This was the first offshore field discovery since 1949. The



parish's 570 producers at that time numbered about 485 oil wells, largest number of any of the eight coastal parishes and 85 gas wells. These figures include offshore and land production.

Except for a slump during 1958 St. Mary gained steadily. Total number of oil wells in 1959 was 1159 and gas wells numbered 231. The parish ranked fourth in the state in crude oil production, (18,915,326 barrels) and fourth in the state in casinghead gas, (26,745,944 million cubic feet). The parish also ranked third in total offshore production in the state and first in new discoveries offshore.

Many great "firsts" have been recorded by the industries operating out of Morgan City. The original ones were Magnolia's and Kerr-McGee's, already discussed in this chapter. Magnolia was also the first to install a flow line beneath the ocean floor which was hailed as the world's longest offshore pipeline. It was the first oil company to install the microwave system. The system was put into effect in 1957 and is used to span the 55 miles between district headquarters in Morgan City to their gulf installations. The company was also first to complete a triple tubing oil well offshore.

Another innovation was a plan which provided added protection to the men working offshore. In 1956 Magnolia hired a registered nurse who trained several men on each structure in emergency treatment. If an accident occurs a physician in Morgan City is consulted and his prescribed treatment is administered by trained personnel until the doctor and patient can be brought together on the rig or in the hospital.

Kermac contributed more than one first. It launched two giant submersible rigs in 1956 which greatly increased its drilling potential.

Phillips Petroleum Company set a new distance record in 1955 by drilling a well 70 miles from Morgan City.

Gulf Oil set a record in 1959 by drilling a well in 204 feet of water, the deepest yet to be attempted by any company.

Drilling offshore wells costs roughly six times as much as an equivalent land well. The average well in the gulf is drilled at a cost of \$268,000 compared to \$50,000 on land. Of course, the deeper the well is drilled the more the cost. After 15,000 feet, each additional foot costs \$40.



Just as oil and gas remain hidden assets until successful drilling unearths them, the values—solid and intangible—of oil exploration and producing companies to the community and area in which they are active are not always readily apparent. It takes a little digging below the surface to discover how area headquarters, district and division offices of major petroleum companies enrich in many ways the cities and parishes in which they locate.

Today in the Morgan City area (Amelia to Patterson) Kerr-McGee, Shell, Gulf, Phillips, Pure, Sinclair, Sun, Texaco, California, Continental, Mobil and Humble have all put down roots. In some cases it may be only an area office but in most instances these companies have invested in their own office buildings and marine bases or are occupying suites in the offshore oil center building on Highway 90 which was erected a couple of years ago to take care of oil company needs.

Many supply firms followed the oil companies to Morgan City. There are at least 107 such firms which list oil companies as their principal customers. They include 11 supply houses, 10 miscellaneous supply firms, eight rental tool companies, six oil sales firms, five mud companies, five repair companies, four truck lines, and four shipyards. They mean employment for people and circulate millions of dollars in this area.

But it is not only the monetary value of oil activity which has had an enriching influence on the Morgan City area. Workers in the industry have brought their families here to reside for varying lengths of time, a few months, many years, and, sometimes, permanently. These new people from all sections of the country have joined in church, school, recreation, organization and civic affairs. To take care of the increased population, the area's religious, educational, governmental, hospital, recreational and housing facilities as well as businesses have expanded at a rapid rate. Morgan City has modernized more in the last decade than at any time in its 100-year history.



## *Industries*

The harvesting of shrimp, crabs, and many varieties of fish from waters of the area, the production of oil and gas inland and offshore, the dredging and processing of clam and oyster shells from lake and gulf water bottoms and the construction and repair of floating and other equipment essential to these enterprises constitute Morgan City's principal industries today.

It was not always so. In the beginning the fertile soil of Tiger Island attracted homesteaders. Fields of sugar cane and corn, orchards of orange, pear, and plum and other fruit trees, gardens of sweet potatoes, beans, garlic and cabbage are described by travelers this way as early as 1819. A few years later there were at least three large sugar plantations, Tiger Island and Bayou Boeuf on the east side of Berwick Bay and Golden Farm on the west, all owned by Dr. Walter Brashear. When his children, who owned Tiger Island Sugar Plantation after 1842, gave part of it for a townsite in the 1850s they are said to have been earning \$60,000 a year from the growing of cane and operation of a sugar house on the plantation.

By 1876 business and industry were more diversified. Newspapers of that day report:

"All of the species of fish known to the lower Mississippi and Gulf waters are obtainable in this vicinity.

"Commerce of the area has greatly increased. The moss receipts this year reached nearly 3000 bales of an average weight of 200 pounds. It was purchased at three cents or three and one-half cents and sold at four and one-half cents or five cents per pound. Because of the lack of pickers there was a decrease compared with the previous year. Most all of the cotton was shipped to New Orleans.

"Thirteen barrels of honey were exported at ten to twelve cents per pound. Bee culture was easy and honey was shipped and sold easily at the New Orleans market at a dollar a gallon.

"About 3200 pounds of bees' wax was shipped; one party shipped 100,000 shingles to a neighboring country; 100



barrels of onions were exported; 200 pounds of wool raised on the bayou were sold here; 50 otter skins, 300 coon skins, and over 4100 alligator hides were sold at forty cents each.

"Over 2500 oranges were exported to Texas; potatoes were raised on our low alluvial soil for both local use and export.

"Pelican oil used for oiling machinery was sold at 60¢ in the raw state and \$1.25 per gallon in the refined state.

"Ice shipments were made daily on the Teche steamers. Considerable amounts were sold in Texas.

"Chickens were raised, but not enough to export any. There was no good reason why all kinds were not raised and shipped in unlimited quantities. The supply was seldom enough for local consumption, at prices from 15¢ to 25¢ per dozen.

"Oyster beds are a short distance out of the city and oysters were sold along the wharves and bayous for 75¢ to \$1.00 per 100. Also large shipments were made to New Orleans and Texas.

"Several cargoes of lake shells were sold for 15¢ to 20¢ per barrel. Large quantities of the shells were used to improve the streets of the city.

"The exportation of lumber amounted to a few million feet. The mills fulfilled as much as possible the Texas demand for lumber.

"Pittsburgh coal was towed in barges via the mouth of the Red River and the Atchafalaya, under the contract with Charles Morgan, for the use of his steamers. Coal was in good demand as fuel for sugar plantations. It is believed that a coal yard for general custom will be opened because of the demand for coal.

"The shipping of birds is becoming a large industry at Morgan City. Several of the stores are beginning to carry on a heavy line of commerce."

## FISH AND OYSTERS

Jacques Lehmann, who arrived in Brashear from France in the year 1870, was an employee of the Morgan line, tried other ventures until 1879 and then went into the business of buying and selling oysters. Natural reef beds lay within a short sail of Brashear and men who lived on neighboring



islands or who went out from this port (first in sail boats, later in gasoline-powered craft) manually wrested the bivalves from water bottoms, brought them to town and peddled them for 75¢ to \$1.00 a barrel. Lehmann and his wife and perhaps a couple of friends or employees bought barrels at a time, shucked the oysters and sold the succulent meat to the Morgan and Pharr lines of steamers. A big business was quickly developed. Lehmann was soon employing as oyster shuckers men who came from Galveston, Biloxi and Baltimore. He shipped oysters by boat and rail to Texas and California. When he started he is said to have had a demand of approximately 25,000 oysters a week. In 1887 a newspaper item reports that he was averaging 300,000 oysters weekly and had one customer who took between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 in December 1886. The DeHarts and LaCostes on Plum Island are among those remembered as regular suppliers of oysters to the Lehmann plant.

Another firm, Gougenheim and Lehmann, were engaged in the oyster packing trade in the 1880s.

Wells, Fargo and Company's office revealed the fact that from Sept. 1, 1886 to May 1, 1887, no less than 13,571,428 oysters were shipped from Morgan City.

As late as 1912 Louis Smyly, an early settler here, had a modernly equipped packing house for the handling of Berwick Bay oysters and fish. A booklet printed that year refers to Mr. Smyly as "owner of considerable property, a prominent member of the Knights of Honor, owner of a packing-house which has trade all over the United States, from Chicago south and from New York to San Francisco.

John Dalton Co., Ltd., opened for business here in 1882. In 1912 the firm owned a large fleet of oyster boats, and shipped not only oysters but catfish and saltwater fish throughout the country.

Bass Fish Depot was also here in 1912. Owner was Edgar Bass who started in business at this port as early as 1872. The depot shipped fish and was a dealer also in raw furs.

In 1887 the Berwick Bay Fish and Oyster Company was doing business on the riverfront in a location on the wharf about two blocks from the railroad. Maurice Blum was presi-



dent; later the name Manuel Cogenheim appears as owner. T. H. Bergeron became owner in 1927 and operated a business in fish and furs in a location on the Klingsville waterfront until only a year or so ago.

By the 1930s firms such as Ozio, Casso and Emery's, St. Mary, Riverside and Reuter's Seafoods, Drackett Fisheries, and Monarch Packing Company and individuals such as Victor Guarisco, Jack Pharr, Ernest "Honey" Casso, H. W. Logan, Sidney Prestenbach, D. Egle and sons, A. J. Breaux, and Alfred Mead had made great strides in the production and/or marketing of freshwater fish and other seafoods.

The Louisiana Oyster and Fish Company, headed by W. J. Lowrance, revolutionized oyster breeding, planting them in deep water, securing them by the dredge method rather than the old method of tonging. Incorporated about 1908, this firm was soon one of the largest operators in their line in the country. The company owned dredges and boats and extensive bedding grounds. G. Prestenbach was vice-president and J. A. Guidry was secretary-treasurer.

The oyster industry in Morgan City flourished for years and then declined until today only an occasional fisherman goes out on his lugger to tong for oysters, fill his boat and return to port where they are promptly sold at the wharf.

Seafood plants here still handle oysters but import them from other Louisiana points situated closer to the present day oyster beds.

Today in the Morgan City, Berwick, Patterson area about eight well established plants specializing in the packing and shipping of freshwater fish — principally catfish, gaspergoo and buffalo — produce about 90% of Louisiana's total production of fresh-water fish. Out of 2,396,000 pounds of freshwater fish produced in Louisiana in 1959, the local port's contribution to this total was 2,104,000 pounds.

## CRABS

For the past three and a half decades, the production and processing of crabmeat has provided a livelihood for many fishermen and plant workers. The meat of this area's sweet freshwater crabs, delicately seasoned, is a favorite on the food markets of the nation.



First experiments in cooking whole crabs, extracting the meat, and packing as white and claw meat, lumps and flakes, were made in the 1920s. During the 1930s and 1940s there were many years when shipments out of this port totaled 500,000 or 600,000 pounds of fresh cooked crabmeat annually. Last year the production in the Houma, Golden Meadow, Morgan City and Berwick area amounted to more than one-fourth of the total crabmeat production in Louisiana.

Favorite food of local residents is boiled crabs, to say nothing of crab stew, barbecued crabs, and crab gumbo. Few of the crabs used for such treats come from the crab plants. They are bought directly from fishermen who sell from their camps along the levee road, a 10-minute drive from downtown Morgan City, or they are caught on baited lines or trot lines by the consumers themselves.

## TIMBER

St. Mary is one of the most highly forested parishes in South Louisiana. Almost 30 per cent, or 112,300 acres of its total 387,200 acres, is in commercial forest land, almost entirely hardwood.

Today there are few saw mills left in St. Mary — none at all in Morgan City — but timber played a vital role in the early history of the town, and local lumber activity accounted for a major part of the 300,000,000 feet of lumber produced annually in Southwest Louisiana.

Soon after the Civil War there was a Berwick Lumber Company in operation across the river, and one of its organizers was Charles Richard Brownell, great grandfather of Morgan City's present mayor, Dr. C. R. Brownell.

In 1875, a sash, door and blind factory was one of the going concerns at Brashear, and there were half a dozen lumber boats constantly plying through the lakes and bayous bringing sawed and split lumber to the mills.

In 1899, the Brownell-Drews Lumber Company built a mill on the waterfront.

C. R. Brownell was president; C. H. Brownell, vice-presi-



dent; and Gus Drews, one of Morgan City's most prominent bankers and citizens of the early era was secretary-treasurer.

The company owned large tracks of valuable cypress timber lands from which 50,000 feet of lumber and 80,000 shingles were cut daily.

Cotten Bros. Cypress Company operated on Bayou Boeuf. The secretary of that concern, William Cotten, is now one of Morgan City's oldest citizens.

Cotten Bros. shipped large quantities of lumber to the United Kingdom and to east United States ports.

Another large mill of the past was that of Wadell-Williams, subsequently to become Norman-Breaux, the last of the saw mills to close down.

When Norman-Breaux finished cutting its timber lands, it operated a planing mill which closed only a few years ago.

## SHRIMP

The production and marketing of shrimp is a multi-million dollar industry at this port. As many as 175 seagoing shrimp trawlers, representing an investment of from \$35,000 to \$60,000 each, make this their home port. While the seafood plants are scattered over a 15 mile radius with Morgan City at its center, located here is the nation's original and largest shrimp fishermen's cooperative organization, the Twin City Fishermen's Co-op. Here also is a modern quick-freezing and storage plant, the Morgan City Freezer.

Shrimp caught in fresh water rivers and lakes or the salty bays along the coast were undoubtedly consumed and used for barter by the Indians. These tasty morsels have been enjoyed by white men from earliest settlers to modern times but it was only 25 years ago that big gulf shrimp were discovered in commercial quantities off the Louisiana coast.

As far back as 1919 Percy Viosca, biologist, made known his findings that small shrimp in warm, shallow inside waters find their way to deep salt water to mature into big white (*Penaeus setiferus*) or brown (Brazilian) shrimp. There they mate, spawn, and die within a year. Their offspring repeat the cycle.



Local dealers were totally unfamiliar with the methods of catching and marketing deepsea shrimp but they learned quickly after an influx here of east coast fishermen on the trail of these big shrimp which, for some unaccountable reason, had migrated from the Atlantic and Florida gulf waters to areas off the Louisiana coast. Morgan City was the closest harbor so it fell heir to an industry which soon made this port famous.

Theodore Anderson of Morgan City is credited with having accidentally brought into a fish dock here the first load of "Jumbos". The year was 1934 and Anderson, an experienced trawler fisherman, working out of Galveston at the time in search of a "pay-load", made a good haul and decided to unload in Morgan City which was much closer than his point of departure. The story goes that local seafood dealers looked askance at the size of the shrimp and feared they'd be so tough they would never sell. Riverside tackled the job of beheading the unusual catch and shipping it.

The deepsea shrimping industry launched full scale in 1937 expanded to a point where Morgan City was tagged "Shrimp Capital of the World". For years the title went unchallenged but then the erratic shrimp migrated or were discovered to be off the Texas coast. Louisiana, after being number one shrimp producing state in the nation for many years, was reduced to second place. But Morgan City retains its claim to being the prime producer of big white shrimp. The bulk of the catch out of Texas ports are Brazilians or Brownies.

## SHIPBUILDING AND REPAIR

As long as there has been a Brashear and Morgan City, there have been shipbuilding and boat repair at this port. Today it is one of the major businesses of the area.

More than a century ago, pirogues were hewed out of cypress and skiffs built with cypress planks hand-sawed from fallen trees.

Sails were made here and schooners rigged at the dock.

Then came the blacksmiths and the machinists who put together boilers for steam propulsion.



Shortly after the turn of the century, the Morgan City Shipyard and Docking Company, a partnership between J. R. Drackett and R. J. Terrebonne, was advertising that their plant "is the largest in Louisiana outside of New Orleans", and boasted of having built the steamboat SUGARLAND for the Southern Pacific.

Mr. Terrebonne remained in the shipyard business, and today the Intercoastal Shipyard, which he founded a half-century ago, is turning out tugs and barges at a fast clip.

A short distance north of this yard, Conrad Industries has two steel floating dry docks each with 700 tons capacity and can lift boats up to 140 feet in length and barges up to 108 feet.

And along the entire waterfront are yards and machine shops all busy repairing boats and working on engines.

In the Morgan City area are shipbuilding concerns such as Sewart Seacraft, Inc., and Dupont, Inc., who are internationally known for their construction of crew transport boats and pleasure craft.

Only 13 parishes in the entire United States employ more persons in boat building and repairs than St. Mary parish.

## SHELLS

St. Mary has an almost inexhaustible supply of calcium carbonate which is used in a wide range of industries. The source of this material are the large oyster shell reefs in the Gulf of Mexico south of Morgan City.

Several concerns are engaged in dredging, transporting and crushing of these shells.

## TRAPPING

"Morgan City Reaps Golden Harvest", a headline in the Morgan City Review proclaims in 1917. The story describes the successful trapping season — \$150,000 worth of fur and hides having been shipped out of this port.

In December 1918 there is a report that \$75,000 worth of furs have been trapped and sold and prospects are that "sales will go over \$200,000 this season".



"Fur Business to Reach Half Million Mark" is the headline in a December 1919 issue of the local paper and the story goes into detail about market prices. "Muskrats which at one time sold at 10¢ are now bringing a top price of 80¢. Coons, which are plentiful, bring \$4.50 for the best quality; minks—\$5.50; otters from \$10 to \$15; and 'possum skins \$1.00."

Trappers and dealers had a multi-million dollar industry here for years. Boats arrived, unloaded furs on the local wharves where they were graded, bid for and sold promptly during the three-month midwinter season. Men who trapped for that portion of the year used their luggers and smaller boats in commercial fishing or "just rested" the balance of the year.

While St. Mary leads all other parishes in number of trapping licenses sold, the "good old days" in the fur business seem to be gone. An industry which meant \$15 million in 1946 to Louisiana has dwindled to slightly more than a million in recent seasons.



# *Mayors and Councilmen*

who have served the Town of Brashear and  
City of Morgan City

**May 11, 1860**

G. H. Mann, Mayor; P. Dalton, A. Ducouro, A. Heymann, L. Maillet and N. Chesnut.

**May 4, 1861**

John S. Gotcher, Mayor; P. Dalton, H. E. Henning, G. Vignes, N. Chesnut and J. A. O'Niell.

**January 6, 1862**

J. H. Lyons, Mayor; J. P. Walters, A. Ducouro, P. Dalton, A. Vitterman, F. J. Gremaud, (During the year Ducouro and Vitterman were replaced by Eddie Luce, and James Holmes)

**September 19, 1865**

J. P. Walters, Mayor; Z. P. Gathright, F. J. Gremaud, Eddy Luce, Wm. Costello, E. F. Finier.

**July 7, 1866**

Theodore Blanchard, Mayor; B. P. Vinson, Wm. Costello, Wm. Crumpton, J. Y. Crank, and Z. P. Gathright.

**January 7, 1867**

Samuel F. Marks, Mayor; H. E. Henning, Z. P. Gathright, M. Goldstein, Wm. Hanchett and Wm. Crumpton. (On Nov. 23, 1867 W. B. Merchant, P. V. Chase and E. L. McClellan replaced Hanchett, Goldstein and Crumpton of that council.) (In Feb. 1868 another change was made and M. Kahn became a councilman.)

**April 1869**

Alexandria Cardillac, Mayor; Nathan Berwick, Wm. Costello, Antonio Vitterman, W. B. Merchant and Jacques Bourdier.

**January 1870**

Dewitt W. Roberts, Mayor; Rene Macready, Theodore Blanchard, James Costello, Mathius Kahn and Pierre Lahitte.

**May 13, 1871**

Charles Smith, Mayor; Rene Macready, Eugene A. Landry, Daniel B. Allison, Wm. Jones and Charles Peterson.

**December 1872**

Thomas W. Nelson, Mayor; Rene Macready, Eugene A. Landry, Jeremiah McCarthy, Wm. Jones and Charles Peterson.

**April 26, 1873**

W. R. White, Mayor. (Same council as above. H. M. Mayo was on the council on July 4 in McCarthy's place. On Oct. 20, B. Robinson replaced Jones. Then Daniel B. Allison and Jones replaced Mayo and Robinson.)

**January 1874**

W. R. White, Mayor; Gray, Robinson, Macready, Jones and Peterson.

**April, 1874**

Joshua Thomas, Mayor; Rene Macready, Wm. Jones, Charles Peterson, M. Goldstein, and B. Robinson.

**January 1875**

C. H. St. Clair, Mayor; J. Wildenstein, John Vanslyke, W. B. Merchant, Alfred Crumpton and Rene Macready. (In August 1877 A. Joret and A. Ermann replaced Wildenstein and Merchant.)



## *Mayors and Councilmen (continued)*

### **January 1879**

C. H. St. Clair, re-elected Mayor; A. Joret, A. Ermann, John Thomas, Reuben Washington and Gus Drews. (O. Ditch replaced A. Joret in Oct., 1880.)

### **January 2, 1883**

E. B. Mentz, Mayor; James H. P. Wise, Leon Kahn, Daniel Lynch, John Wilson and Charles Levingston.

### **December 15, 1884**

James H. P. Wise, Mayor, replacing Mentz who resigned. St. Clair replaced Wise on the council. On Jan. 4, 1886, Cahn resigned and was replaced by Theodore Lehmann. On March 5, 1886, P. O. Dupuis replaced St. Clair.

### **January 10, 1887**

J. H. P. Wise, Mayor; Theo Lehmann, Guillaumo Serville, Thomas Shannon, John Ater and Isaiah Mills.

### **January 5, 1891**

J. H. P. Wise, Mayor; Charles Lehmann, C. V. Chase, John Ater, A. J. Thorn and George W. Smith. (Smith died before taking office and John Dalton was appointed.)

### **October 19, 1892**

Lehmann resigned on council and Edgar Bass was appointed in his place.

### **June 26, 1893**

Dalton resigned and J. M. Dyer replaced him; John Ater resigned and John B. Shinn was appointed.

### **May 21, 1894**

J. M. Dyer, Mayor; C. V. Chase, Edgar Bass, John B. Shinn and A. J. Thorn.

### **January 7, 1895**

J. M. Dyer, Mayor; John B. Shinn, John Dalton, Jacques Lehmann, John Arenz and J. R. Jolley. (In 1896 Lehmann resigned and Edgar Bass was appointed in his place.)

### **August 9, 1897**

G. H. Douglas, mayor; J. Dalton, J. Arenz, E. Bass, J. R. Jolley and John B. Shinn.

### **January 25, 1899**

Thomas Shannon, Mayor; J. F. Prohaska, Theo Lehmann, Dan Lynch, Sr., A. E. Joret, and M. Coguenheim.

### **January 13, 1903**

Thomas Shannon, Mayor; M. Coguenheim, R. A. Squires, H. F. Belanger, Warren Kinsey and L. A. Guidry. (In Oct., R. A. Squires resigned and J. M. Parmelee was appointed to council.)

### **January 7, 1907**

Charles L. Wise, Mayor; Albert Toerner, Frank Pierron, August Soumeillan, Sol Loeb, and W. O. Ditch. (In April 1910 Ditch resigned and was replaced by J. M. Dyer.)

### **January 16, 1911**

M. D. Shannon, Mayor; Clarence Hanson, Wm. Cotton, M. E. Norman, R. A. Squires, and F. J. Price.

### **January 29, 1915**

M. D. Shannon Mayor; M. E. Norman, R. A. Squires, F. J. Price, C. E. Jones and Van E. Clements.

### **January 13, 1919**

M. D. Shannon, Mayor; M. E. Norman, F. J. Price, H. F. Belanger, C. A. Bibbins, and R. A. Squires.



## *Mayors and Councilmen (continued)*

**May 13, 1920**

M. E. Norman resigned, replaced on council by J. R. Drackett.

**October 14, 1920**

H. J. Boudreaux appointed to council to fill vacancy created by death of R. A. Squires in June 1920.

**January 17, 1923**

M. E. Norman, Mayor; A. F. Berniard, H. J. Boudreaux, Henry Loeb, M. D. Shannon and R. J. Terrebonne.

**January 13, 1927**

M. E. Norman, Mayor; Henry Loeb, R. J. Terrebonne, M. D. Shannon, A. F. Berniard and E. I. Dreher.

**August 17, 1931**

M. D. Shannon appointed mayor to replace M. E. Norman, deceased. F. D. Winchester appointed to replace M. D. Shannon on council.

**May 19, 1932**

Louis Desobry appointed to council to replace F. D. Winchester, deceased.

**June 6, 1935**

John Cutrone appointed to council to replace Louis Desobry, deceased.

**March 19, 1936**

R. J. Terrebonne resigns from council.

**July 16, 1936**

M. D. Shannon, Mayor; Henry Loeb, A. F. Berniard, E. I. Dreher, Tom Ozio and John Cutrone, councilmen appointed to respective offices by governor.

**1940**

Same officials.

**July 15, 1942**

Dr. F. H. Metz replaces A. F. Berniard, deceased.

**January 1947**

M. D. Shannon, Mayor; J. D. Hamilton, Dr. F. H. Metz, Tom Ozio, John Cutrone and A. H. Berniard.

**January 1951**

Dr. C. R. Brownell, Mayor, M. Dave Kahn, Sr., Harry S. Hover, Sr., Dr. B. A. Mula, P. H. Kenny, Wyatt M. Rosson, Sr.

**January 1955**

Same officials.

**Now in Office**

Dr. C. R. Brownell, Mayor; M. Dave Kahn, Sr., Harry S. Hover, Sr., Frank J. Domino, Dr. L. A. Bourgeois, Cyrus P. Giroir.



## *Postmasters Since 1855*

|                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Robert B. Brashear        | October 8, 1855       |
| William J. Greenwood      | November 8, 1856      |
| Zebulon P. Gathright      | May 16, 1857          |
| Thomas T. Brashear        | September 10, 1857    |
| Samuel E. Lawes           | November 11, 1858     |
| Onezipher Landry          | January 26, 1860      |
| Charles S. Simmons        | December 17, 1860     |
| Abiel Rosengrants         | August 31, 1865       |
| Isaac Lehmann             | June 25, 1866         |
| Julius V. Winter          | October 29, 1866      |
| Valentine Chase           | May 15, 1867          |
| Percy O'Brien             | February 4, 1868      |
| Thomas W. Nelson          | November 18, 1868     |
| Charles Miller            | April 12, 1870        |
| O. F. Woodcock            | January 19, 1882      |
| Neil Sinclair             | February 4, 1884      |
| Jacques Lehmann           | October 16, 1884      |
| Henry M. Mayo             | November 18, 1884     |
| Felix M. Tucker           | August 30, 1890       |
| Thomas Shannon            | May 18, 1893          |
| Byrnes M. Young           | January 12, 1898      |
| James R. Jolley           | April 20, 1910        |
| Julius P. Hebert          | April 24, 1914        |
| Melvin P. Palmer          | September 1, 1923     |
| Homer L. Jolley           | June 16, 1936         |
| Arnold G. Trahan (Acting) | March 31, 1950        |
| Roy Belanger              | December 1, 1951      |
| Thomas Sofford            | July 16, 1955-to date |

## *Property Assessments*

| <b>MORGAN CITY</b> |            | <b>BERWICK</b> |           |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----------|
| 1876               | \$129,655  | 1908           | \$263,456 |
| 1886               | 149,540    | 1916           | 244,575   |
| 1896               | 202,050    | 1926           | 613,980   |
| 1906               | 378,632    | 1936           | 405,120   |
| 1916               | 1,034,231  | 1946           | 1,294,847 |
| 1926               | 2,957,660  | 1950           | 1,646,550 |
| 1936               | 2,069,530  | 1959           | 3,295,460 |
| 1946               | 3,630,073  |                |           |
| 1950               | 5,293,586  |                |           |
| 1955               | 7,707,790  |                |           |
| 1960               | 10,535,100 |                |           |



# Census Figures Since 1850

|                                   | 1850   | 1860   | 1870   | 1880   | 1890   | 1900   | 1910   | 1920   | 1930   | 1940   | 1950   | 1960   |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Brashear                          |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Morgan City                       |        |        | 776    | 2,015  | 2,291  | 2,335  | 5,477  | 5,429  | 5,982  | 6,969  | 9,859  | 13,378 |
| Berwick                           |        |        |        | 796    | 769    | 713    | 2,183  | 1,691  | 1,679  | 1,906  | 2,619  | 3,927  |
| St. Mary Parish                   | 13,697 | 16,816 | 13,860 | 19,891 | 22,416 | 34,145 | 39,368 | 30,754 | 29,397 | 31,458 | 35,845 | 48,315 |
| PER CENT OF CHANGE.               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Morgan City                       |        |        |        | +159.6 | +13.7  | +1.8   | +91.9  | — .9   | +10.2  | +16.4  | +40.0  | +37.8  |
| Berwick                           |        |        |        | —3.4   | —7.3   |        | +206.2 | —23.0  | — .6   | +13.5  | +37.4  | +49.9  |
| St. Mary Parish                   | +22.8  | —17.5  | +41.3  | +12.7  | +52.3  | +15.3  | —21.9  | —4.4   | +7.0   | +14.0  |        | +34.7  |
| MAKE UP OF POPULATION             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Whites                            |        |        | 500    |        |        |        | 3,126  |        |        |        |        |        |
| 1. Native born                    |        |        |        |        |        |        | 2,690  |        |        |        |        |        |
| 2. Native born of foreign parents |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 3. Foreign born                   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Negroes                           |        |        | 276    |        |        |        | 2,351  |        |        |        |        |        |
| St. Mary Parish                   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Whites                            | 3,423  | 3,508  | 4,203  | 6,717  | 7,976  | 13,789 | 18,043 |        |        |        |        |        |
| Negroes                           | 10,274 | 13,308 | 9,607  | 13,115 | 14,395 | 20,264 | 21,266 |        |        |        |        |        |
| Slaves                            | 9,850  | 13,057 |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Free                              | 424    | 251    |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |



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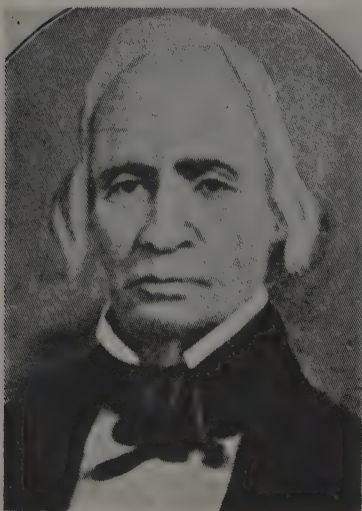
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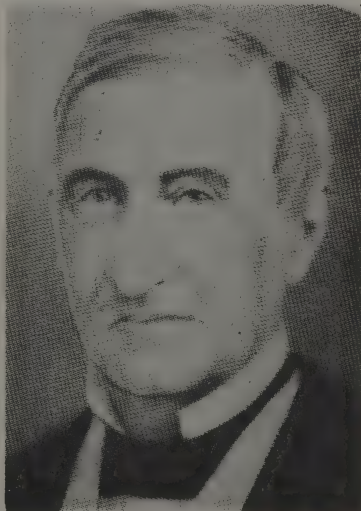


Photo from Collection of  
Mrs. A. J. Champagne

**THE STORE OF LAFOREST** was one of the first buildings in Brashear. Louis Laforest, native of France, came here in 1856.



**DR. WALTER BRASHEAR**  
for whom this community was  
first named . . .



**CHARLES MORGAN**  
his name was given this  
city in 1876.





A VIEW OF THE MORGAN CITY WATERFRONT ABOUT 1914





A PORTION OF THE MORGAN CITY WATERFRONT IN 1959

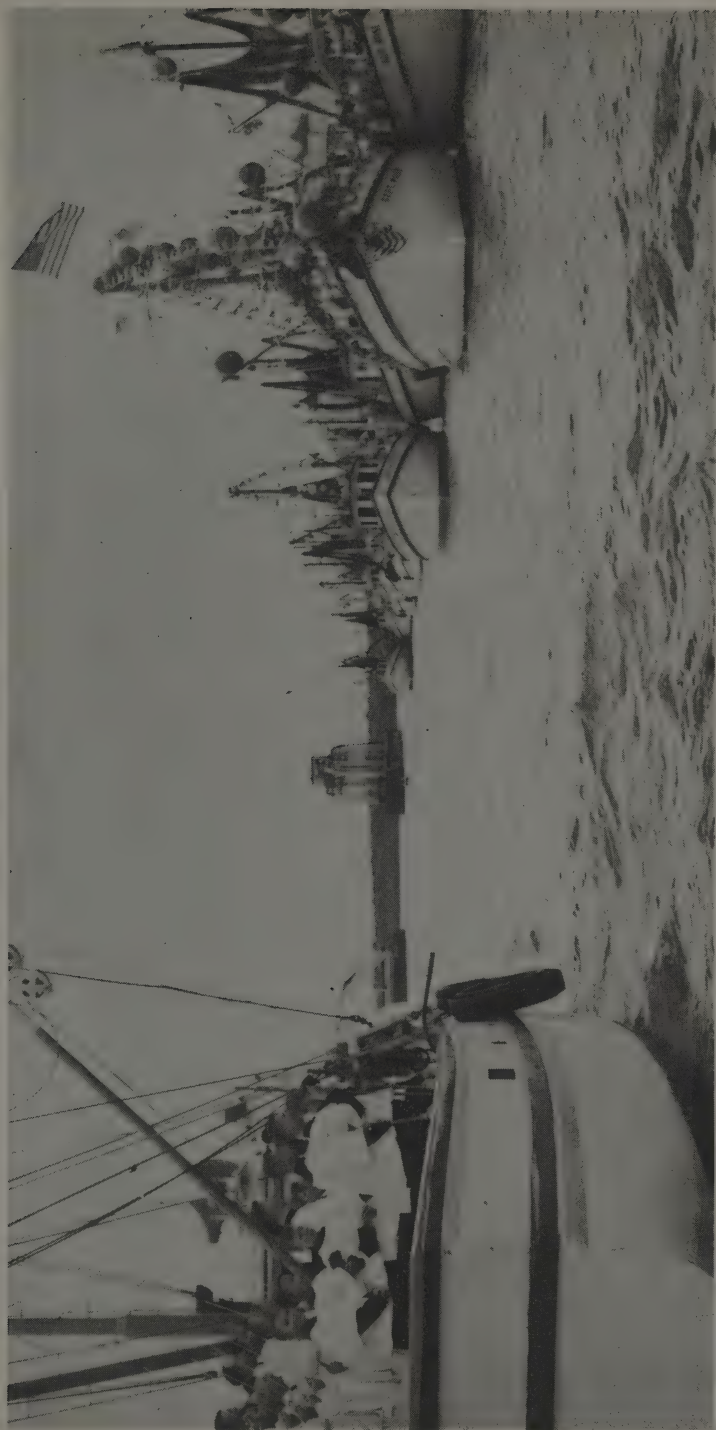
—Photo by J. T. Grice





Photo by J. T. Grice  
**LAKEWOOD HOSPITAL** opened here in 1955 with 52 beds. The beautiful, fully modern institution was built at a cost of approximately \$750,000 financed through a tax issue voted by property owners of Hospital Service District No. 2 of St. Mary parish and a Federal grant. The hospital is currently being expanded to 94 beds at more than half a million dollars additional outlay.





**BLESSING THE FLEET**, a tradition in seafaring history brought to this port 24 years ago through the initiative of P. A. LeBlanc and Harvey Lewis of this city, is a highlight of the annual Louisiana Shrimp Festival staged here every Labor Day weekend. The historic custom of blessing shrimp trawlers and workboats is followed by a picturesque water parade on Berwick Bay. Labor Day is given over to a speed boat regatta on Lake Palourde, one of the outstanding racing courses in the nation.





**TYPICAL of the high-of-the-ground, two story spacious homes built in this area before 1900 is this plantation residence on Ingleswood Plantation pictured in 1898. The home, no longer standing, is believed to have been owned by Jared Y. Sanders who died there in 1881. His grandson, Jared Young Sanders, III, was elected Louisiana's lieutenant-governor in 1903 and governor in 1907.**



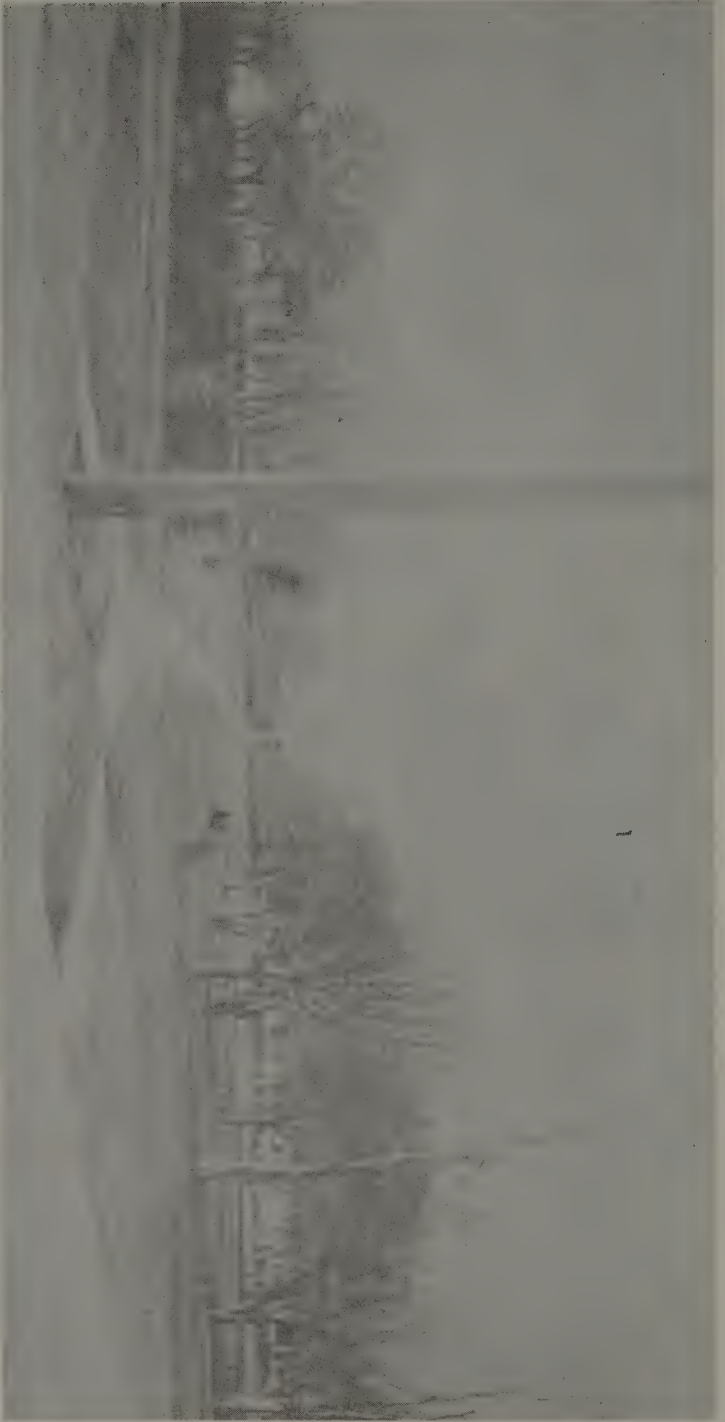


**BARON RANDOLPH NATILI, (1844-1915) shown in inset, was agent at Morgan City for the Morgan Louisiana and Texas railroad. This picture also affords a glimpse of Oneonta Park which the company had here in the 1880s. Its statuary and zoo made this depot an interesting stop for passengers of the line.**



**MORE THAN A CENTURY OLD is this home at Bayou Ramos. It is believed to have been built in the early 1850s.**





LAWRENCE PARK, today a square of beautiful trees, a bandstand, swings and other recreation equipment, looked quite different in the early 1900s, as the above photo shows. Not many years later the Civil League of Morgan City, headed by Mrs. A. F. Storm, beautified the park. Palms were planted, sidewalks laid and the bandstand erected. Baron Natilli gave a beautiful fountain for the park center.



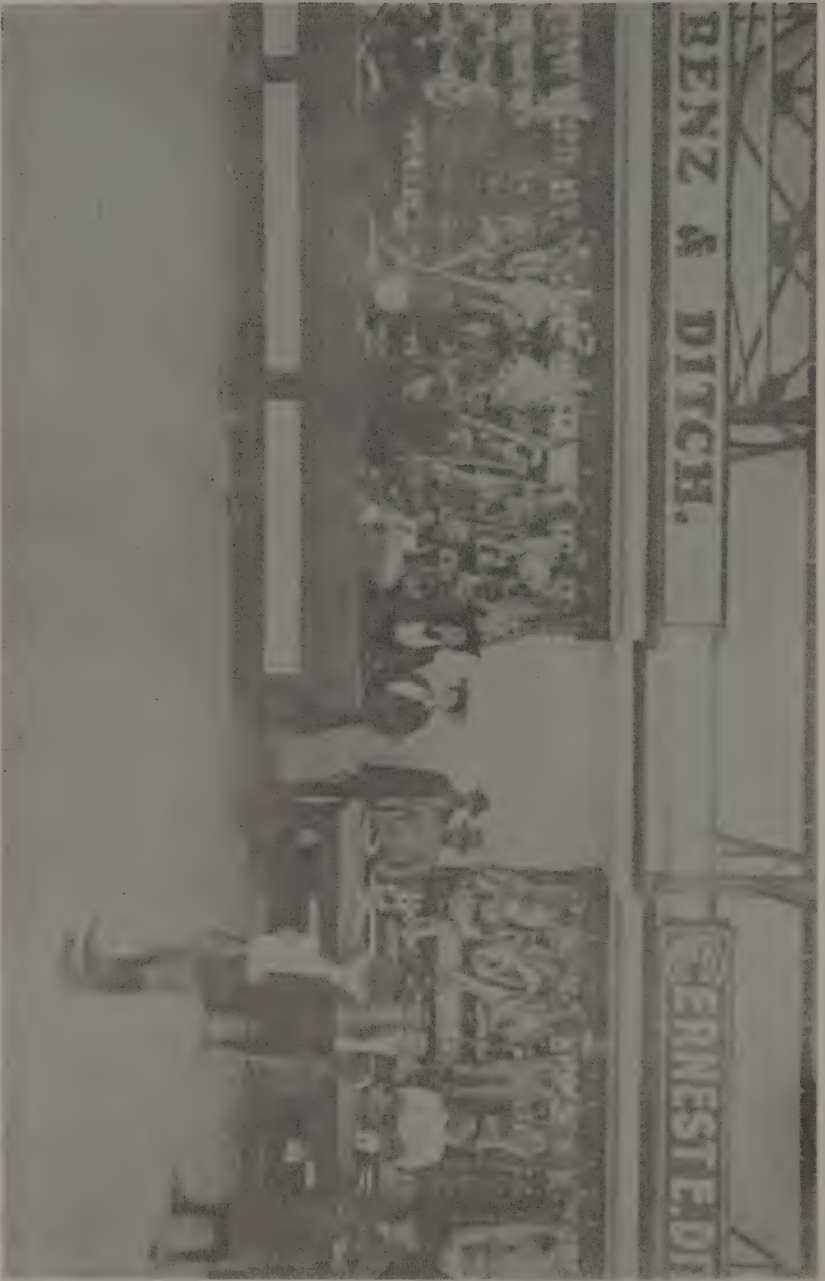


**MORGAN CITY's** riverfront street in "horse and buggy days"—early 1900s.



**THE "LOUISE"** was in service between Morgan City and Texas ports before Charles Morgan purchased the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western railroad. A side-wheeler with the typical "walking-beam" engine, she was of moderate draft and could make about 10 knots in smooth water. Like the other Morgan vessels, she was famous for service and meals served aboard—Photo copy in collection of H. J. Heaney.





From Collection of Victor Guarisco  
PUBLIC MEAT MARKET stalls were the "super market" of the late 1800s and early 1900s in Morgan City. This picture shows a small section of the extensive riverfront market and a portion of the stalls operated by John Arenz and Ernest E. Ditch.







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